

# ELYTRA PERILS

**AN UNOFFICIAL MINECRAFTER'S ADVENTURE**



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**NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR**

# **Elytra Perils**

**A Gameknight999 Adventure**

**By  
Mark Cheverton**

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## **Books by Mark Cheverton**

### **The Gameknight999 Series**

*Invasion of the Overworld*

*Battle for the Nether*

*Confronting the Dragon*

### **The Mystery of Herobrine Series: A Gameknight999 Adventure**

*Trouble in Zombie-town*

*The Jungle Temple Oracle*

*Last Stand on the Ocean Shore*

### **Herobrine Reborn Series: A Gameknight999 Adventure**

*Saving Crafter*

*The Destruction of the Overworld*

*Gameknight999 vs. Herobrine*

### **Herobrine's Revenge Series: A Gameknight999 Adventure**

*The Phantom Virus*

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*System Overload*

### **The Birth of Herobrine: A Gameknight999 Adventure**

*The Great Zombie Invasion (Coming Soon!)*

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*Herobrine's War (Coming Soon!)*

### **Box Sets**

*The Gameknight999 Box Set*

*The Gameknight999 vs. Herobrine Box Set (Coming Soon!)*

## **Note from the author**

This is my first short story about Gameknight999. I had intended it to be much shorter, but sometimes, while I'm writing, the story can take control and guide itself to its eventual conclusion regardless of what the author intends; that's what happened here. But I feel good about the final story and how it ended. If you think the ending hints at more stories to come after this, you are absolutely right. I want to write more stories like this, but they will likely not be written very quickly, as my writing schedule is very tight.

Part of the purpose of this story is to introduce Minecraft players to the new game on the Gameknight999 Minecraft Network, <http://www.gameknight999.com>. We're calling it Elytra Peril...hey, wait a minute, that's the same name as the title of this short story. You're right. I wanted to write a story that you can be thinking about while you are playing the game on our server. When I release a new story, it will be linked to a new game or game mode on the Gameknight999 Minecraft Network. So as you are playing, you can role play that section of the story with your friends and really imagine you are in it with Gameknight999. Keep checking [www.gameknight999.com](http://www.gameknight999.com) and [www.markcheverton.com](http://www.markcheverton.com) for notices about new short stories and new Minecraft games.

**Teachers**, I have learned a lot from writing 5 failed novels and then publishing 15 Minecraft novels. I've read a lot of books about plot construction, character development, use of tension and conflict...and have broken the elements of a story down into bite-sized pieces that are easily digestible for kids. These materials have been successfully tested in workshops with kids. You can find these materials on the Teacher Resources page on [www.markcheverton.com](http://www.markcheverton.com). It is my hope that you print out many copies of this story and give them to your students. After going through my materials, students might enjoy identifying the Hook or the Dark Night of the Soul or the Character Flaw. By seeing how I use these techniques in this story, I hope your students will begin to understand them better and use them in their own writing. Hopefully, together, we can inspire them to write more stories of their own. They can send their stories to [www.markcheverton.com](http://www.markcheverton.com). I post every story I receive that is more than 1 sentence long, so please encourage your students to send them to me. Every email I receive is answered, personally, by me.

Keep reading, keep writing and watch out for creepers.

Mark Cheverton (Monkeypants\_271)

Don't give in to your fears, for they will form a prison where escape is difficult. You must keep pushing against your fears and refuse to yield. It doesn't matter how hard you push, or if you make great strides against your fear or anxiety; all that matters is that you refuse to give up. For every time you push back against your fear, the bars of your prison become a little weaker until one day they will shatter. Remember Crafter's words, "Deeds do not make the hero, it's the fear they overcome that does."

## **Chapter 1**

### **The Phone Call**

Gameknight wasn't sure how long this would take, but he moved carefully up to the lava and peered down. A warm glow came from the molten stone, but offered little light. The walls of this area were cracked and jagged, with veins of lava flowing through the stone. But even with all that lava, there was little light. Fortunately, he'd prepared the space by placing many torches along the stone platform that he'd meticulously built while being attacked by fire imps, lava slimes, demons and bone serpents. Now, the battlefield was ready.

Carefully, he tossed the Guide Voodoo Doll into the boiling stone. He didn't have to wait long. A distant growl filled the air; it was incredibly spooky. With the Minishark in his hands, he moved back away from the lava and stepped onto the platform of stone blocks.

And then it appeared.

Two giant eyeballs stared down upon him as a massive curved mouth snapped closed, the razor sharp teeth crashing together, all of it connected by a vertical column of creepy skin and bones. It was the Wall of Flesh, the gateway into Hardmode in Terraria. The massive boss moved forward, passing through hills and lava, forcing Gameknight999 to move backward across the stone platform.

"Here goes nothin'," he said to himself.

Gameknight opened fire with the Minishark. A hail of bullets slammed into the creature, causing tiny red numbers to appear; it was HP loss...but not enough. Suddenly, the eyeballs opened fire. Blue laser beams lanced down at him, striking his Molten armor, which was fortunately holding up well, for now.

Gameknight continued to fire as evil looking hands reached out to him from the ends of multiple long spiny arms. Drawing his Demon Scythe, he launched sparkling arcs of blue magic at the hands, destroying them quickly. But that didn't stop the lasers firing at him from the demonic eyes.

He moved back again, this time pulling out his Water Bolt. Shooting the magical weapon at the bottom eye, Gameknight jumped into the air and activated his boots, narrowly avoiding a cluster of blue laser beams. His rocket boots lifted him upward, leaving a trail of sparkling particles as they pushed him away from the ground. It gave him an uneasy feeling, flying through the air. He was always uncomfortable with flying and was deathly afraid of it. But right now, he was more afraid of the Wall of Flesh.

Firing the Water Bolt again, he strafed one of the eyes, causing more red numbers to appear in the air as the creature took more damage. Then the stream of water trickled to a stop as Gameknight's mana was consumed. He smiled; he'd done significant damage.

“Maybe I am going to win this after all,” he said, but instantly knew that was a mistake.

A fire imp suddenly appeared and launched a barrage of attacks, then disappeared, only to reappear above him. Putting away the Water Bolt, he aimed his Minishark and destroyed the magical creature. But while he was distracted, the Wall of Flesh moved closer and attacked. Blue shafts of energy struck him again and again, causing his health to drop. Quickly, he drank a potion of regeneration, then turned and fired just as the roar of the monster echoed through his MLG headphones.

Just then, his cell phone rang. Tommy glanced at the number and saw an area code he didn’t recognize; it was 999.

*What kind of area code was 999, he thought. I’ll just ignore it.*

The Wall of Flesh moved forward, the ravenous jaws snapping at him as shafts of light lanced out at him from terrifying eyeballs. Using his Pheonix Gun, he fired a burst of rounds while he drank a mana potion. With his magic recharged, he used the Demon Scythe again, tearing HP from the creature’s body, but not before a blast of cerulean blue laser beams tore into his Molten armor. Gameknight saw his own HP drop as the intense beams of light blasted through the protective coating and dug into his flesh. Fortunately, he was just playing the game, and was not *in* the game for real.

Tommy hadn’t used his father’s invention, the Digitizer, for a while now; that whole time traveling thing had scared him a bit. But more importantly, he wasn’t anxious to use the Gateway of Light to go into Terraria. The idea of battling Mimics, or Wyverns, or Wandering Eyes, or World Feeders while actually *in* the game seemed terrifying...and probably a dumb thing to do. Even Gameknight999 wasn’t foolish enough to do that.

His cell phone rang again. Tommy glanced down from the battle and saw the area code again; it was 999. This time there was a picture on the screen, and it was Herobrine.

*Is Herobrine calling me?* Tommy thought. *How can that be?*

The ringer continued to wail as the vibration from the device caused the surface of the desk to buzz annoyingly. He took his eyes away from the computer screen and reached for the phone. Just then, a splat sound filled his headphones. Turning to his 4k monitor, he saw the words *YOU WERE SLAIN* glowing in the middle of the screen; he’d lost again!

With a sigh, he answered the call.

“Hello,” Tommy said.

“Is this the famous Gameknight999?” a voice asked.

“Who is this, what’s this about?”

“You have a problem in Minecraft,” the voice said with a sinister tone. “Your friends are in need of your assistance, if you are brave enough to help them.”

“What are you talking about?” Tommy asked.

“Turn on FaceTime and see their peril.”

He held the phone out and pushed the FaceTime button, instantly, the screen changed from displaying the phone number to a blocky environment, with strange rectangular cows mooing and tiny white chickens clucking about. And then he realized he was seeing an image of

Minecraft.

“What is this, some kind of prank?” Tommy asked.

“Actually, I think you’re right,” the voice said. “This is a prank, but unfortunately for your friends, it is a lethal one. Here look.”

The image changed as the point of view scanned across rolling grass-covered hills, past a forest in the background, past some kind of gigantic structure that seemed like a massive cell phone floating in the air, until the scene settled onto Crafter’s village in Minecraft. Tommy could see the large cobblestone wall that ringed the community, as well as part of the obsidian wall around his own castle visible off to the left side of the screen. NPCs walked about along the fortified walls. They appeared nervous as they stared down at the camera.

“Let’s get a little closer, shall we?” the voice said.

The village moved closer, the fortified wall now filling the entire view. It tilted up, then zoomed in on the villagers atop the ramparts. A short girl with curly red hair stood staring down at the camera, a stocky character right next to her.

“Sticher, Digger!” Gameknight exclaimed.

“Yes, these are your friends in Minecraft, Gameknight999,” the voice said. “They are currently trapped within their village. I’ve placed barrier blocks all around them; there is no escape.”

“Are you hoping to starve them or something,” Tommy said. “You’re an idiot, I’ll just come in there in creative mode and open the wall up.”

“If you come into Minecraft as a normal user, then I’m afraid I’ll have to punish this village,” the voice said in a maniacal tone. “Look what floats above them.”

The camera tilted as it backed up. Above the village was a layer of lava, floating a few blocks above the cobblestone watchtower. It seemed to be resting on some kind of invisible plane, likely more barrier blocks.

“You are going to come into Minecraft as the User-that-is-not-a-user,” the voice continued. “If you do anything else, I’ll turn the barrier blocks into air, and let the lava coat everything, including the villagers.” The voice paused for a moment to let it sink in, then continued with a sinister tone. “You’re going to do what I say, or else.”

“You don’t know what you are doing,” Tommy pleaded. “They’re alive. All the villages are alive; they’re not just segments of code moving about the terrain. They’re people just like you and me, the only difference is that the NPCs are digital.”

“That is just fascinating, but you know what...I don’t care!”

“Who are you and why are you doing this?” Tommy asked.

“As to who I am, we’ll get to that later,” the voice replied. “But as to why...I’ve heard so much about Gameknight999, the great User-that-is-not-a-user. Well, I want to find out if all the stories are true. I want to see if you are a worthy adversary, or just another poser trying to pretend that they really understand Minecraft. You see, Gameknight999, I’m bored. I’m tired of just hacking into servers and adding mods and disabling plugins. The security systems of many of the Minecraft servers out there are pathetic and offer no challenges at all. I’ve written viruses

to get into many of these servers, and it wasn't even difficult. Now I need a new challenge, and I've decided that you're it. I'm going to test you with some challenges, to see if you're as good as people say. If not, then bye-bye villagers." The voice laughed maliciously.

"No, you can't do this!" Gameknight protested, but the voice continued to laugh.

"I'll give you five minutes to get into Minecraft. If you are a second late, then we'll have us a barbeque in the village...you understand."

Tommy didn't say anything; he just growled in frustration.

"I didn't hear you?" the voice said.

"Yes, I understand," Tommy replied. "Now, tell me your name, if you're not afraid."

"Oooo...clever tactic," the voice mocked. "Fine, I'm the one you've heard about lurking in the shadows, watching. I've infiltrated every level of the software and know more about how it was developed than probably any single person. I'm going to exact my revenge on Minecraft when I'm ready, but for now, I'm just going to have a little fun and toy with all the pathetic users."

"This all sounds familiar," Tommy replied. "It's been done before by Herobrine, and that didn't end very well for him."

"Herobrine!" the voice exclaimed. "That virus was nothing, a little distraction I created because I was bored. No, I'm the real thing. Get ready for some serious trouble because Entity303 is here now."

*Entity303*, Gameknight thought with dread.

He'd heard about him. No one was sure if it was just one person, or a group of people, but they were tough and knew a lot about Minecraft. This wasn't going to be easy.

"You now have four minutes forty-five seconds to get into Minecraft," Entity303 said. "Maybe I'll just get rid of one barrier block to motivate you."

"No...no, I'm coming," Tommy said. "But mark my words, you're going to be sorry you messed with Gameknight999."

Before Entity303 could reply, Tommy hung up the phone.

Grabbing the bottle of water nearby, he drank the contents quickly, then positioned a pillow near his head. Reaching out, he flipped on the power supply to the digitizer. The electronics began to glow as LEDs lit up like bright little stars, then began to blink faster and faster. A buzzing sound echoed off the bare concrete walls of the basement. At first it was faint, like a single bee flying nearby, but slowly the sound grew louder and louder, until the noise buzzed like a hive of angry hornets. Quickly, Gameknight set his head on the pillow; bruised foreheads in the past had taught him to be ready.

Suddenly, he was enveloped in a cloud of bright white. His body felt scalding hot and freezing cold at the same time while electrical charges ran across his skin like tiny spiders. A swirling sensation enveloped his mind. It felt as if he were getting sucked down the drain of some kind of massive bathtub, getting squished and stretched as he spun, the fire and ice of the Digitizer biting into his skin.

And then, just as suddenly as it started, it ended. Darkness filled his mind. It was a darkness

so complete that it felt like something was covering his eyes. Fear began to nibble at his senses. Was he blind? was Minecraft destroyed? Was...

"Are you going to get up and stop acting like an idiot," a voice said next to him.

Gameknight opened his eyes and realized he had them shut and was facing down into the ground. He definitely felt like an idiot. Glancing up, he saw brilliant red curls dangling across strong shoulders as a pair of deep brown eyes peered down at him.

"You planning on getting up anytime soon?"

"Hunter!" Gameknight exclaimed.

"You remembered my name, that's a good start," Hunter said with a sarcastic smile. "I figured with all the lava over the village, you'd be showing up sooner or later."

The User-that-is-not-a-user reached up, took her proffered hand and stood. Around him, he saw the usual blocky landscape, cube-like bushes and terraced hills. A constant breeze blew from the east to the west, carrying with it the rich smell of the grass and the woody aroma of the nearby oak trees. In the distance, he could hear the sorrowful moan of a zombie. Thankfully it was far away, but it still caused icicles of fear to nibble at his spine. No question about it, he was back inside Minecraft.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Into Minecraft Again**

“Hunter, how is it you aren’t trapped in the village?” Gameknight asked. “I saw Stitcher and Digger, and it was pretty obvious they couldn’t escape.”

“I was out hunting,” she explained. “The forest around the village is still growing back but the blazes did some serious damage to it. It’s not fully recovered enough to attract any animals. So I went farther away, to the nearby Taiga forest to hunt and caught a bunch of rabbits. But when I returned, I saw all the stuff around the village.”

“You mean the lava?” Gameknight asked.

“No, there’s much more than that,” she replied.

“Like what?”

“Like how about you put on some armor and I’ll show you,” Hunter replied.

She gave him a set of diamond armor, then handed him his enchanted diamond blade and an enchanted bow. Gameknight smiled as he took the weapons from her and put them into his inventory. With a solid set of armor and weapons with him, he felt better about being in Minecraft.

Moving to the nearby oak tree, Hunter untied two horses. She leapt up onto a black and white spotted mare, then handed the reins of a large white stallion to her friend. Gameknight jumped up into the saddle and followed her out of the basin in which he always spawned. Turning in the saddle, he looked at the high rocky overhang that extended out over the shallow basin, a waterfall spilling over the edge. The cool liquid splashed down into a pool that eventually flowed underground into a dark cave. He could still remember that first day when the spider had attacked him; that waterfall had saved his life.

High up on the hill that loomed over the tiny valley, he saw the dirt tower he’d built so long ago with torches in its sides so he could find his way back at night. Gameknight remembered when he’d made that single block. It had been easy back then, but that was before he’d gone through so much in Minecraft. Now, after all his adventures, the height of that tower made him feel a bit queasy, so much so that his head spun a little. The thought of making that tower again filled him with fear. It wasn’t that he was afraid of heights; he was just afraid of crashing to his death. This paranoia had slowly been coming on for a while, but in the heat of battle, he didn’t have time to worry about it. Still, he knew he could never build that tower today.

“Are you sight seeing, or are you riding?” Hunter yelled.

Gameknight turned back to her and realized he’d stopped galloping; his horse was just standing still. Urging his horse back to a trot, he caught up to Hunter and continued toward the village that sat far off in the distance.

Checking the sun, he could see they had only a few hours before sunset. Being on horseback, they'd easily make it to the village before dusk. But something about the sky nagged at the back of his mind. The color wasn't quite right. Instead of a clear bright sky-blue, there was a slight pinkish tint to it, as if someone had spilled a bit of crimson paint onto the overhead canvas that stretched from horizon to horizon. Something was wrong, but Gameknight couldn't quite figure it out.

They rode through the afternoon in silence, pushing their horses as hard as they could. Grass-covered hills dotted with brightly colored flowers moved past them as they headed for their village. A pristine forest of oak trees followed the grassy plains, their leaves rustling in the breeze. Gameknight expected to see zombies hiding in the shadows of the mighty trees, but fortunately, there were none. As they shot through the forest, weaving around trunks and ducking under branches, he thought he saw something that looked like green torches placed against the trees, but he couldn't see the torches, only the circle of green flickering light that seemed to hug the tree as if it were clinging desperately to the rough bark.

"You see those green things?" Gameknight asked.

"Yeah, I noticed them on the way to your hidey-hole," Hunter replied. "We call them leaves." She laughed, then flashed him a mischievous grin.

"Not the leaves. I mean those glowing things on the sides of the tree trunks."

"What are you talking about?" Hunter asked.

Suddenly, a clattering sound mixed with the jingling of metal filled the air. From behind a cluster of trees and shrubs a zombie horse burst into the open, an armored zombie riding on its back. But, instead of wearing the normal gold armor that Gameknight had come to expect of the decaying monsters, this one was wearing chain mail, and was holding an enchanted sword.

Gameknight veered to the right as Hunter turned to the left, circling around the monster.

"I can't believe it," the User-that-is-not-a-user shouted.

The two friends circled around the monster and met on the other side.

"What is that monster?" Hunter asked.

"It's called a fallen knight," Gameknight replied.

"Why have I never seen one before?" Hunter asked.

"Because they don't exist in regular Minecraft," he answered. "You can only find them in special, modified versions of Minecraft, which your server isn't."

"Then how is this possible?"

"I don't know," Gameknight replied.

Just then, an arrow bounced off his diamond armor. Another mounted fallen knight emerged from behind a copse of trees, this one wielding a bow. The two monsters turned their zombie horses toward them and charged.

Gameknight drew his enchanted bow and fired two quick shots; Hunter's arrows were already flying through the air. The knights zigzagged, easily avoiding the pointed shafts. Gameknight fired again, then drew his sword.

"Here, you can put this to use better than I can," Hunter said.

Reaching into her inventory, she drew her own diamond blade and tossed it to her friend. Catching it in his left hand, Gameknight kicked his horse forward. As he passed the fallen knight, he swung his blade against the creature's glowing iron sword. The two weapons met in a shower of sparks as the enchantments tried to act on each other. But the fallen knight did not expect Gameknight's second blade. Swinging with his left, he slashed at the monster's chain mail, cutting into the jingling armor with all his strength.

An arrow bounced off his chest. Kicking his horse into a gallop, he charged at the mounted archer. Weaving back and forth, Gameknight made himself difficult to hit. The knight pulled his mount to a stop so as to aim at his target. That was his first mistake. Hunter's arrows streaked through the air, striking the monster in the chest and side. The zombie archer flashed red as he took damage. Turning, the monster faced Hunter. That was his second mistake.

Gameknight charged at the creature. When he neared, he leapt off his horse and knocked the monster to the ground. Standing quickly, the User-that-is-not-a-user attacked the creature with a vengeance, not ever allowing the fallen knight to notch another arrow. He tried to defend himself with the bow, but it quickly shattered. Hunter fired three shots at the monster just as Gameknight's attacks caused its chainmail to fall away. With a surprised look on its decaying face, the fallen knight disappeared with a pop.

Not waiting to pick up the glowing balls of XP, Gameknight mounted his horse and charged at the remaining zombie. Hunter rode behind Gameknight, just off to the right. She fired, aiming at the monster that was approaching. The creature tried to weave out of the way, but it was too late, the User-that-is-not-a-user was upon him. Diamond sword clashed with iron as Gameknight and the fallen knight did the dance of battle, and for one of them, the dance of death. Carefully moving around the creature, Gameknight kept the armored zombie facing away from Hunter. This allowed her to shoot at the creature without it dodging her shots. Arrows pierced the monster as it flashed red with damage.

Gameknight stood up in his stirrups, then leapt at the creature. With his swords outstretched, he knocked the creature from the zombie horse, then tumbled to the ground. Rolling to his feet, he spun and slashed at the monster before it could gain its footing.

Hunter was suddenly there. With arrow notched, she aimed down at the monster, then brought her foot down on the monster's sword, pinning it to the ground.

"It would be better for you if you don't move," Hunter growled.

The armored zombie looked up at Hunter and growled. Gameknight could see this creature was different than your typical zombie. When captured, the decaying monsters usually seemed afraid and were ready to give up, but this monster was brimming with hatred and had a thirst for violence. He growled and snarled at Hunter and Gameknight999, reaching out with his free hand to strike at the girl.

Moving quickly, the User-that-is-not-a-user stood on the monster's other arm while Hunter moved her foot from his sword to his wrist. The creature was completely incapacitated, yet it still struggled and growled.

"I know you are a fallen knight," Gameknight said.

The monster stopped his struggling and stared up at the User-that-is-not-a-user, his eyes burning with a craving for destruction.

"If you tell us how you came into Minecraft, then we'll let you live," Hunter said. "But if you continue to fight us, then I will end your miserable life."

She drew her arrow back a little farther, causing the enchanted bow to creak slightly.

The monster stared at Hunter, then back to Gameknight999.

"This fallen knight is here," the monster growled. "It just is...there is no why or how."

"You're saying you don't know how you came into Minecraft?" Gameknight asked.

"Do any creatures really know why they are here in Minecraft," the monster said. He cast his hateful eyes toward Hunter. "How did the girl come to be here in Minecraft?"

"I was born here," she snapped.

"Same is true for fallen knights," the zombie said.

"So you're saying you just spawned into the Overworld?" Gameknight asked.

The monster didn't respond, it just glared at his two captors, a hateful expression on his scarred, decaying face.

"What do you think?" Hunter asked.

"I don't know, but I don't like this," Gameknight replied.

"You don't like this...that's your conclusion?" Hunter said, exasperated. "That's really a big help." She pointed her arrow down at the monster. "What do we do with him?"

Gameknight stared down at the monster, then knelt so that he was close to the monster's face. The stench of the creature was almost overpowering and made him gag.

"We're going to let you up, zombie," Gameknight said. "It isn't necessary that we are enemies; we can be friends and live together in peace. When we release you, I want to you get onto your horse and ride away. Do you understand?"

The monster nodded his head, but the hateful, violent expression in his beady red eyes stayed constant.

Gameknight sighed, then glanced at Hunter.

"You ready?" he asked.

She nodded her head, her red curls dancing about her shoulders.

"OK."

Both Gameknight and Hunter stepped back. With her foot, Hunter kicked the monster's sword into the bushes. The zombie slowly stood and looked at the two of them, then snarled and charged at Gameknight, his razor sharp claws gleaming at the end of each finger. The User-that-is-not-a-user didn't bother to move or raise his weapons, three arrows zipped through the air as if fired from a machine gun. They struck the zombie and took the last of his HP. Armor and weapons clattered to the ground as the fallen knight disappeared with a pop.

"Well, that was fun," Hunter said.

But Gameknight didn't reply. Instead, he stared up at the stained sky, wondering what had happened to Minecraft.

"Come on, Gameknight," his friend said. "We can sightsee later. Right now, we need to get

back to village before it gets dark. Who knows what kind of monsters are going to come out at night?”

“Right,” Gameknight replied as he retrieved his horse and swung up in to the saddle. “After all, nighttime is monster time.”

“You know it,” Hunter replied as she turned her mount toward the distant village and galloped forward.

Gameknight followed his friend, but as he rode, his mind went to all the modded versions of Minecraft he’d played over the years. He searched his mind for where those fallen knights might have come from. But as he considered all the possibilities and imagined all of those modded monsters appearing within Minecraft, icy needles of fear stabbed at his soul.

## Chapter 3

### The Village

They rode through the rest of the forest in silence. No more monsters tried to surprise them, but they both heard sounds neither Gameknight nor Hunter could recognize. The occasional guttural howl or barking-like growl or shrill scream brought tiny square goose-bumps to Gameknight's arms. Fortunately, the sounds were far away, and the two companions had no desire to find the source.

"So what is it with users?" Hunter asked.

"What do you mean?" Gameknight replied.

He steered his horse around a large, suspiciously dense shrub with his sword in his hand. The enchanted blade cast a sparkling circle of light on the surroundings, filling the shadows with a purple hue that drove back the darkness just a bit. With his eyes on the bush, Gameknight rode past; nothing emerged from the leafy cover. He glanced back toward Hunter.

"You feel the need to make Minecraft more dangerous, so you modify it?" she asked.

"I don't do it," Gameknight said. "But..."

"But what?"

"I've played some of these modded versions before," he replied.

"What do you and your idiotic users add to Minecraft to make it more dangerous?" she asked.

"Well, I've seen some with giant zombies that are taller than the highest spruce tree, and dragons in the Overworld, and three-headed monsters, and massive wolves, and..."

"What is wrong with users?!" Hunter growled. "These monsters could hurt the villagers that are in these servers."

"But we don't know if those villagers in the other servers are alive," Gameknight protested.

"And you don't know that they aren't, either," Hunter snapped. "Users are reckless with their power. They should be blocked from Minecraft."

"Well..."

Gameknight didn't want to get in an argument with his friend. He knew that Minecraft was made *for* the users. And it was an open software system so that people could make these mods and create something new and different, but what if all the villagers *were* alive. These modded versions could be doing terrible things to the villagers.

He sighed, worrying now about what might be happening to all those NPCs. As he considered all the different monsters in all the different modpacks, they left the oak forest and moved into a birch forest biome that was struggling for life. Small saplings stood in place of the majestic birch trees that had once covered this landscape. The blaze king, Charybdis had sought

to destroy everything, turning the Overworld into a charred wasteland, in hopes of transforming it into the Nether. Gameknight and his friends stopped the fiery monsters, but the scars from the battles still marked the Overworld, as this recovering forest showed.

Some trees stood in full health, but most were just tiny saplings, struggling to reach upward toward the sun. The soil was all new, with long blades of grass growing ankle high, red and blue flowers hidden here and there within the verdant growth. But even with all the color and the grass and the flowers, it was a sad sight. He could remember how this forest had once looked, and now, it was but a shadow of its true self.

They rode toward a large, grass-covered hill. The ground sloped up gently, then became steeper until the horses were jumping up a block or two at a time. On the other side of the hill, the User-that-is-not-a-user knew they would finally come to Crafter's village.

Suddenly, something began to emerge from behind the hill. A needle-like tower came into view as they climbed the mound, the thin structure jutting upward into the sky like a shaft of glowing power. It probably reached all the way up to the build limit. It was a cylindrical thing, maybe only eight blocks in diameter, but made of glass. Bright shafts of light shot up through the center, the cylinders apparently hollow. Then he noticed the tower was not a single structure, but rather multiple cylinders, one on top of the other, with a huge gap in between, the beams of light connecting all the things together.

"What is that?" Gameknight said.

They moved higher up the side of the hill.

"Ahh...you noticed that," Hunter said. "Wait till you see the square thing."

"The square..."

He never finished the sentence. As they reached the top of the grass-covered hill, Gameknight saw a gigantic rectangular-shaped object floating a few blocks off the ground. It was wide and tall, but thin compared to its size, the corners all gently curved. The top of the thing stretched up maybe fifty blocks high if not more. The back was a grayish material, maybe stone, but the front was covered with some kind of dark material. At the bottom center of the object was what appeared to be a round button, with...and then Gameknight recognized the object: it was a cellphone!

Colorful beams of sparkling particles shot from the phone to the towers as if the electronic device was somehow connected to a cell network. Suddenly, he remembered seeing a video about this. Sethbling, the redstone/command block master, had done a groundbreaking demonstration of communicating with the physical world from within Minecraft, <https://youtu.be/IdlZRhKmWJY>. He'd done it with a cell phone, and here it was.

Pulling his attention away from the cellphone and cellphone towers, Gameknight finally noticed Crafter's village. It sat behind the cellphone and was lit up with an orange light. A layer of lava sat above the village, floating just above the top of the cobblestone tower. It extended from the edges of the cobblestone wall that ringed the community.

"Come on," Hunter shouted as she kicked her horse into a sprint.

She shot forward, with Gameknight struggling to keep up. They galloped past the cellphone

and rode up to the village gates. Jumping off his horse, the User-that-is-not-a-user ran up to the metallic doors and tried to open them. An invisible barrier stopped him before he could even reach the cobblestone wall; it was barrier blocks. The evil Entity303 had surrounded the village with barrier blocks. Nothing could break those transparent cubes unless you were in creative mode. But for some reason, when Gameknight used his father's Digitizer, creative mode was always impossible.

He looked up to the top of the fortified wall, and saw Stitcher standing there staring down at him. Her crimson curls fell around her shoulders and glowed like shining ruby springs. Digger, standing next to her, pounded on the barrier blocks with his huge fist, more out of frustration than an attempt to break free.

And then Crafter stepped forward. His young friend peered down at him with his old wise blue eyes. His black smock with the gray stripe had a fiery orange tint to it as the sun slowly began to kiss the horizon, casting shafts of ruby light across the land. Neither of them needed to speak. They both knew the village was in trouble. Gameknight would do what he could from outside the village, and he was sure Crafter was doing what he could to protect the people within their community.

Giving his friend a nod, Gameknight999 turned and stepped up to the cell phone and pushed the round button.

"OK, Entity303, I'm here, now what?" Gameknight said. He didn't bother to yell; likely this new monster was watching them right now.

"You made it into Minecraft fast, young Tommy," the voice said from the cell phone.

"In here, my name is Gameknight999," he snapped, anger filling his voice.

"Very well, Gameknight999," Entity303 replied. "Now, I've heard so much about you, how resourceful and clever you are. You've battled countless monsters across this Minecraft server and have distinguished yourself in battle many times, but what I'm curious about is, are you really all that brave?"

"What are you talking about?!" Gameknight growled.

"Well, it's one thing to battle zombies and skeletons with your armor and swords," the voice continued. "But we both know they are fairly stupid and can easily be tricked. And even that overzealous virus, Herobrine, was totally predictable. How much intelligence and bravery did it really take to defeat him? I suspect anyone with common sense could have stopped that failed program."

"That's not true!" Hunter shouted. "Gameknight did what no one else could have done!"

"Ahhh...the ever faithful and always hot-headed, Hunter," Entity303 said. "I had hoped to trap you inside the village, but I see I missed. Well, watching your little sister be destroyed will just have to entertain the both of us."

"That's not gonna happen," she snarled.

"We'll see," Entity303 said. "It all depends on how intelligent and brave your little friend, Gameknight999 is. I think he will fail because, deep down inside, he wants to fail so that he can be free of all this responsibility. Isn't that right Mr. User-that-is-not-a-user?"

“No!” Gameknight snapped.

The voice from the cell phone laughed.

*But was he right?* Gameknight thought. *I hate putting these villagers, my friends and family, in danger. I’m always doing that, and then I must figure out how to fix things. Sometimes, I miss just being a kid and playing Minecraft.*

Pushing the thoughts aside, he took a step toward the phone.

“What is it you want, Entity101?” Gameknight asked.

“It’s Entity303 and don’t you forget it!” the voice snapped.

“Whatever,” he replied.

“You think you’re clever, trying to make me angry,” the voice continued through the cellphone.

“Just get on with it,” Hunter said. “What is it you want from us?”

“I’ll tell you what I want,” Entity303 said. “Gameknight, you need to complete the fuzzy rainbow before the timer runs out, or it’s game over for your friends in the village. You got that?”

“What are you talking about?” Gameknight asked.

“Figure it out, Loser-that-is-a-loser. Entity303 is out.”

And the voice went silent just as the sun finished sinking behind the horizon.

Gameknight glanced at Hunter, confused.

“What is he talking about?” he asked.

She shrugged as she shook her head, equally confused.

Suddenly, letters appeared within his head. Gameknight had experienced this before, when his sister, Monet113, or Shawny, had been typing to him from the physical world. But this time, he knew it was not from any of his friends; it was from Entity303.

At dawn, the timer starts, the words said in his mind. If you’re late, then your precious village gets a lava bath!

“Hunter, he just gave me a message,” Gameknight said. “When dawn comes, he’s gonna start a timer.”

“What are you talking about?”

“Entity303, he sent me a message from the physical world,” Gameknight explained. “He said he was going to start a timer at dawn.”

“How long will we have when he starts the timer?”

“He didn’t say, but I’m guessing it won’t be long,” the User-that-is-not-a-user replied.

Just then it began to rain. But this rain was different than anything Gameknight had ever experienced. The rain droplets were big, really big. When they hit his exposed skin, they actually hurt a little. He glanced at Hunter as he held out a hand, the raindrops splashing off his square palm and throwing tiny square cubes of water in all directions. Over the village, the User-that-is-not-a-user could hear the rain sizzle as it hit the molten stone. It reminded him of frying bacon, but the cool water had no effect on the lava. The boiling stone continued to stay glowing and lethal.

“We need to get to some cover,” Gameknight shouted, but the roar of the storm was louder. Hunter shrugged, then cupped a hand to an ear.

“GET TO YOUR HORSE!” he shouted, then ran to his steed and jumped into the saddle.

As he pulled his horse around, Gameknight saw Hunter was already mounted and ready to ride. Glancing over his shoulder, he waved at Crafter and his friends, worry filling his eyes. He kicked his horse into a sprint and headed back toward the forest they’d just ridden through; it was the closest thing to shelter that was nearby.

Gameknight’s thoughts went to his friends in the village. He was certain they were afraid, but likely thought the User-that-is-not-a-user would find a solution and save the day.

*But what if I can’t find a solution?* Gameknight thought.

The responsibility for their lives felt like a massive weight pressing down, threatening to squash him.

“I don’t know if I can do this,” he muttered to himself, the blast of the rain drowning out his words. “How can I come up with a solution when I don’t even know what’s happening. *Complete the fuzzy rainbow?* What does that even mean? How can I find a solution when I don’t really even know the problem?”

Waves of fear smashed down upon him as he rode through the brutal deluge, his courage and resolution being slowly washed away.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Deluge**

The two friends rode hard across the rolling grass-covered hills and through the recovering birch forest, as the gigantic drops of water pelted them and their animals. It was as if he had his head inside a gigantic bell; the rain banged on his helmet with the force of a hammer, making it ring incessantly. Drops stung his face as he rode, and moans of discomfort came from the horses.

In the distance, the oak forest emerged from the obscuring storm, their salvation from the drenching downpour. The shadows under the drooping tree limbs seemed dark and foreboding, though it was hardly any darker than being out in the open. Clouds covered the sky overhead and the moon was completely unable to penetrate the thick dark canopy. Everything was darkness, but it didn't matter; they needed to get out of this pounding rain.

Hunter headed for the largest of the oaks, one that seemed taller than a normal tree, with limbs that stretched out far to the sides as if trying to push away the other trees. As they neared, Gameknight peered up at the top of the tree. It was easily three to four times taller than a normal oak. The top of the tree made the User-that-is-not-a-user feel a little dizzy; the height was slightly terrifying. Quickly, he looked back to the ground and concentrated on riding; he couldn't bear the thought of being that high in the air. They guided their horses under the tree and leapt off, tying their leads to a low branch.

"I'm glad to be out of that storm," Hunter said.

She reached up to her helmet and began taking it off, when Gameknight held up a hand.

"Something's not right," Gameknight said as he drew his two swords. "I think I just heard something."

Stepping farther into the forest, he peered into the darkness. Just then he heard it again...metal clanking on metal.

"Did you hear that?" he asked.

Hunter nodded as she lowered the diamond helmet onto her head again and drew her enchanted bow. The dark shadows under the huge oak tree filled with a shimmering light as the enchantments on their weapons pushed back the darkness a little.

"It sounded like metal on metal," Hunter said quietly, her words nearly lost to the torrential downfall. "Iron golem, maybe?"

"I doubt we'd be that lucky," Gameknight replied as he moved to pat his horse on the head, calming the animal's nerves.

Suddenly, a shining spear shot out of the darkness, piercing the air where Gameknight had been standing. The square metallic shaft stuck into the tree with a thud, then withdrew back into the darkness.

“WHAT WAS THAT?!” Hunter exclaimed, her bow pointing into the darkness.

Quickly, Gameknight put away a sword and pulled out a torch. He placed it into the ground, then moved to the other side of the tree and planted more torches into the soggy ground. Circles of yellow light extended into the gloomy forest, but did not reveal their assailant.

Metal clanked against metal off to the right. Gameknight ran to the left, directly away from the sound and placed more torches on the ground. As he neared their adversary, he stopped and put away his torches, then drew his second sword.

“Hunter, shoot some arrows out there to light up the darkness,” Gameknight shouted.

Arrows tipped with fire streaked through the air and hit the ground, casting more light into the darkness. Her bow had the *Flame* enchantment on it, making every arrow a fire-arrow. Hunter launched more projectiles toward the clanking sound, driving away the gloom.

And then he saw their enemy. Flickering light from the flames splashed a yellow glow upon what seemed like an armored knight replete with shield and lance. The knight’s armor had an intricate swirly design on it, the metal itself colored a pale yellow. The creature wore a helmet that completely obscured their face, with narrow slits for its eyes. Two large metallic horns stuck out the sides of the helm, giving the knight a monstrous appearance.

Stepping forward, the knight jabbed at Gameknight, hoping to catch him off-guard. Blocking the attack with his left blade, the User-that-is-not-a-user brought his right sword down upon the monster’s shield. A great crashing sound filled the air as the sword and shield vibrated, neither yielding.

Stepping back, Gameknight observed his opponent. The shield, with the same pale yellow color and intricate curving design, looked as indestructible as the armor.

Suddenly, the monster charged again, rushing forward with unexpected speed and agility. The razor sharp spear shot forward and struck his diamond chest plate. The force of the blow pushed Gameknight backward, into the darkness. Jumping to his feet, he moved around to the left, trying to get behind the monster.

An arrow shot through the forest and bounced off the knight’s chest plate, making a pinging sound, like that of a marble being dropped onto a tin pot. Another arrow hit the knight followed by another and another. The monster charged at the source of the projectiles, toward Hunter.

“Oh no you don’t,” Gameknight said.

He rushed after the knight, sprinting with all his strength. When he reached the scene of the battle, the User-that-is-not-a-user found Hunter backed up against a tree, a constant flow of arrows streaking toward the enemy and bouncing off the impenetrable metallic coating. But from behind, Gameknight noticed the armor across the knight’s back was missing.

Moving quietly behind the monster, he slashed at it with both swords. A great high-pitched roar came from behind the horned helmet. The knight turned and attacked Gameknight999.

“Hunter, shoot it in the back!” he yelled as the User-that-is-not-a-use danced away from the lance.

The knight charged, trying to skewer his foe, but arrows struck the monster from behind, making it flash red with damage. Turning, the armored monster charged back toward Hunter,

only to find Gameknight's blades attacking from behind again.

The monster flashed red again.

Together, Gameknight and Hunter slowly chiseled away at the creature's HP until finally, Hunter's arrow took the last of the creature's health. The armored monster disappeared, but surprisingly, the bottom half of the creature was still present. At that moment, Gameknight recognized the creature; it was a Goblin Knight. They had just destroyed the Upper Goblin Knight, leaving behind the Lower Goblin Knight.

"Hunter fire!" Gameknight shouted.

"But look at it," she said. "It only has legs and hips, with that little head sticking up."

Her description was spot on. The lower knight had normal sized legs that connected at the hips, but the creature had neither torso nor arms. The upper knight had been perched on top of this creature, and now without the armor and shield, it was vulnerable. But that didn't stop the lower knight. It charged straight at Hunter, somehow attacking her and making her flash red with damage.

"Ouch!" she shouted.

Gameknight leapt forward and brought his swords down onto the goblin making it flash red. It turned and charged at him, trying to kick and bite. As Gameknight backed up, Hunter fired her arrows at the creature. Instantly, the burning arrows cause the lower goblin to burst into flames. With a high-pitched scream, it ran out into the pounding storm, letting the rain extinguish the fire. Turning, the tiny monster readied another charge, but this time, both Gameknight and Hunter had their bows ready. Their enchanted fire arrows struck the monster as it approached, burning away more of its HP until it disappeared with a pop at the edge of the forest.

"You think that's all?" Hunter asked as she turned and scanned the dark forest.

"Who knows," Gameknight replied. "But I think we should..."

Before he could complete his thought, the rain stopped as suddenly as it had started. Stepping out from under the tree, Gameknight looked up into the sky. Sparkling stars began to emerge as the clouds moved off to the west. A silvery light bathed the landscape as the moon that was beginning to kiss the western horizon shown down upon the land. To the east, a thin line of red stretched along the horizon; the square face of the sun began its entrance onto the stage. The dark sky blushed a fiery red, driving the stars from sight and filling the landscape with a warm crimson glow. As the sun rose, Gameknight saw something stretching up high into the sky. It was a curving thing, filled with a myriad of colors, each colored band slightly different from its neighbor.

"What's that?" Hunter asked.

Gameknight smiled, then glanced up into the sky as if he were staring into the eyes of Entity303.

"It's a rainbow," the User-that-is-not-a-user replied. "We need to get there before the timer starts."

He sprinted to his horse and untied the lead from tree branch. He leapt into the saddle and pulled his mount around to face Hunter. She was already upon her steed and ready to ride.

“What are you waiting for,” she said with a sarcastic smile, then kicked her horse into a gallop.

Gameknight urged his horse into action, following his friend. As they rode, her red curls streamed behind like a fiery red flag; it was a fitting addition to the glowing orange sky. But just as hope started to drive away his fears, letters flowed through his head.

Forty minutes and counting.

The words filled Gameknight999 with dread. The clock had started, and he still didn’t understand what he really needed to do.

*How am I going to save everyone when I don’t even know what to do?* Gameknight thought, his uncertainty feeling like a poison within his soul. But he knew he had no choice. If he gave up, then he guaranteed the outcome. As long as he continued to try, then there was hope.

## Chapter 5

### Rainbow Portal

They found the rainbow's source in a clearing not far from their battle with the goblin knight. It seemed as if someone or something had cleared a large area from the center of the forest, trees and bushes cut down at ground level, creating a perfectly circular clearing. Gameknight knew someone with World Edit had probably done this, using the wand and likely creating a cylinder of air to remove the trees and bushes.

They tied their horses near the edge of the circle and walked to the center. As they neared the rainbow, Gameknight could see it was made of colored blocks of glass. Each band was a consistent color as they arced upward into the sky. Roy G Biv was the order of the blocks, reds on the inside and violet on the outside.

He laughed mockingly.

"What?" Hunter asked.

"He got it wrong," Gameknight said.

"He got what wrong?"

"The rainbow," the User-that-is-not-a-user explained. "The red should be on the outside and the blue on the inside. He put the colors in the wrong order. The only time they are like this is in a double rainbow. Entity303 isn't perfect, he makes mistakes."

"But what about his clue, finish the fluffy rainbow?" Hunter asked. "I don't see anything fluffy, and this rainbow looks complete."

Gameknight moved closer to the glass structure, and as he went around the other side, he was surprised at what he found.

"Hunter come around here," he said.

She quickly ran around the side and stood next to Gameknight, shocked and amazed. Before them stood a portal made out of colored glass blocks. Every color possible was present in the rectangular frame, a sparkling sheet of light at the center shifting from one color to the next. It was like staring into a kaleidoscope with colors bathing the ground in all directions.

"I guess we need to go through there," Gameknight said.

"I suppose," Hunter replied. "But how do we know it isn't a trap?"

**Thirty-five minutes and counting**, the letters said as they scrolled through his mind.

"We have no choice," Gameknight said. "There are only thirty-five minutes left. You can stay here if you want, but I'm going through."

"Don't be an idiot," Hunter replied with a smile. "I'm not gonna let you have all the fun!"

With an arrow notched to her bow, she stepped through the multi-colored portal, a grim look of determination on her square face. Her figure wavered for just an instant, then disappeared.

Gameknight glanced up at the sky again, imagining that he was staring straight into Entity303's eyes. Then he drew his two swords.

"I'm not sure what I'm doing, but I'm not just gonna stand around and worry," Gameknight said. "It's *GO* time."

And he stepped through the portal, with all of his uncertainties and fears wrapping around him like the coils of some kind of terrifying serpent. As he disappeared, the User-that-is-not-a-user thought he heard laughter, sinister, mocking laughter that chilled him to the bone.

## Chapter 6

### Chamber of Fear

Gameknight appeared on a round platform made of quartz, a ring of dark stone at the edge. Sixteen white cubes were positioned around the edge of the platform, with a colored cube of glass above each. The glass was connected by a ring of more quartz blocks that formed a circle above the edge of the platform. At the very center was a single sea lantern, more colored glass blocks set in the ground.

All around the platform, Gameknight saw a curved wall that was made of some kind of dark material. It curved all around the platform, making it seem as if he was inside a gigantic hollow sphere. Rings of sea lanterns stretched around the spherical shell, adding more light to the structure, making it impossible for shadows to survive in the bright environment.

“What is this place?” Hunter asked.

Gameknight didn’t respond, he just slowly turned, taking in all of their surroundings. He could see large round holes in the walls of the huge spherical shell. They looked like curving tunnels that extended far from the shell, leading out in all directions. Some of them pierced the side of the sphere from below the platform while others came from above. The tunnels were made of different colors, with stripes and rings and spots decorating every round passage.

**Thirty-three minutes: better get flying, if you dare,** the words said as they scrolled through his mind.

“We’re running out of time,” Gameknight said.

“Ok, I’ll hurry up if you tell me what we’re supposed to do,” Hunter replied.

That was when he noticed Hunter’s armor was missing. Glancing into his inventory, he saw his was missing as well. In fact, everything was missing except for an enchanted bow, a single arrow and something he didn’t expect to find...a set of elytra wings.

“Hunter, check your inventory,” Gameknight said.

She paused for a moment and closed her eyes, then opened them, an expression of surprise on her face.

“What happened?” she asked. “Where’s all our stuff. And what’s the deal with these wings?”

“Those are Elytra wings,” Gameknight explained. “They’re new to Minecraft. I think Entity303 expects us to fly through those tunnels.”

And then he remembered a video he saw on one of the Minecraft snapshots...the elytra wings. They give the player the ability to glide, but they were difficult to control and took a lot of practice. He had heard about this game they were in as well; it had been called Elytra...something, he couldn’t remember. There had been numerous videos made on this

course, and he'd watched one, but it had been late at night, and Gameknight didn't remember very much. What he could recall was that at the end of the tunnel, you click on a chest, and take a fuzzy cube of wool. Each tunnel gives a different color.

Reaching into his inventory, he moved the wings to the slot normally reserved for the chest plate armor. Instantly, the Elytra appeared on his back, like the gray wings of some kind of gigantic bug.

"How did you do that?" Hunter asked.

"Put the wings where your chest plate would go," Gameknight explained.

Wings suddenly materialized on Hunter's back.

Glancing around at the pedestals that ringed the quartz platform, he noticed signs on each, a single word written in the center. He saw 'red' written on the sign under the red glass cube, and 'blue' written under the blue cube.

"Fuzzy rainbow, I get it now," Gameknight said.

"What?"

"We need to complete each course, and collect the colored wool before the timer runs out," Gameknight said.

"You mean fly with these wing-things," Hunter replied.

"They're called Elytra."

"Whatever, let's just get this done," she growled.

**Thirty-two minutes left**, the words displayed in his mind.

Suddenly, a sorrowful moan echoed out of one of the tunnels, followed by a mechanical wheezing sound.

"I suspect there are monsters in those tunnels," Gameknight said.

"You think?" she replied sarcastically.

The User-that-is-not-a-user stepped up to the edge of the platform and peered down. The bottom of the spherical shell was a long way down there; a fall from this height would certainly be fatal.

"OK, Gameknight, what's the plan?" Hunter asked.

He glanced at his friend, then stared down at his feet. His fear of heights wasn't a problem when he was building or climbing or doing normal Minecraft stuff, but flying down there and going through those tunnels...it was terrifying. Flying was completely different from climbing. You didn't worry about crashing into things when you climbed, but the thought of flying through those tunnels turned Gameknight's blood to ice.

"Hey...you OK?" Hunter said. "You look like you're shaking."

He stepped back from the edge of the platform and stared at his friend.

"I don't know if I can do this...you know...flying through those tunnels," Gameknight said in a weak voice. "I can face zombies or blazes or ghosts or even ender dragons, but the thought of flying through those tunnels is..." He didn't want to verbalize his fear; it would likely make him feel like a coward.

But then the image of Stitcher staring down at him from the village's wall filled his mind.

She had an expression of fear painted on her boxy face, no not fear...terror. But even with a huge layer of lava hanging over her head, Gameknight could still see confidence and hope in her brown eyes. She had no doubt Gameknight would do whatever was necessary to help the village. Stitcher had faith in him, as did Digger and Crafter and Herder and everyone in the village. They were relying on him, and he couldn't let them down. After all, if he quit, then he would only be guaranteeing the outcome and that was unacceptable.

"Gameknight, you want to stay here and I'll fly the course," Hunter said, compassion and understanding in her voice.

"NO!" he exclaimed. "Our friends need me...no, they need us. And we aren't gonna let them down, are we?"

"Not gonna happen," Hunter replied, a grin on her square face.

"Let's do this," Gameknight growled, confidence filling his voice.

"What do you always like to say...let's danc..."

"No, that was the old Gameknight," he said. "This is the new Gameknight999, and now...it's GO-time!"

"You mean, fly-time!" she added.

Gameknight gave her a grin, then stepped up to the side of the platform and jumped.

## Chapter 7

### Elytra Peril

For the briefest of moments, all of Gameknight's fears were realized as he fell, the unrelenting fingers of gravity wrapping themselves around him and drawing him down toward his doom. But then, suddenly, Gameknight's wings opened and he was soaring through the air.

"I'm flying...I'M FLYING!" he screamed.

A joyous laugh escaped his lips as the terror that had filled his entire being was now replaced with the sheer enjoyment of flight.

"I see that, *genius*," Hunter replied as she glided up next to him. "How about you pick a tunnel."

"Ok, just a minute," he replied.

He soared around the central platform on which they spawned. He could now see the platform was actually the flattened top of a sphere that was held up by a twisting line of glowing sea lanterns.

**Thirty-one minutes**, the text scrolled through his mind.

*I have to do this faster, somehow*, he thought as he finished his revolution around the spherical shell.

"There are thirty-two tunnels in total," Gameknight said. "But probably half are entrances and half are exits, so we need to only do sixteen of them."

"That's great," Hunter said as she rolled her eyes. "I can do the math, we have two minutes for each. But we'll never get that done if we don't start soon."

"Right. Head for the gray one with the blue stripe."

Gameknight banked, veering to the right and he dove toward the opening, Hunter right behind. As they entered the tunnel, the echo of clattering skeleton bones filled the air. Suddenly, an arrow zipped past Gameknight's head.

"Watch out for the..."

The User-that-is-not-a-user never finished the sentence. Hunter fired three quick shots as they approached the monster, her arrows silencing the skeleton instantly.

"Keep your eyes open and don't get shot, or crash, or fall," Hunter said.

"Great advice," he replied.

The tunnel turned to the left, then slowly dropped. Gameknight leaned forward and brought himself near the ground, the blue and white stripes flashing past him in a blur.

They did a couple more turns, then reached a long banking turn to the right that must have spiraled downward hundreds of blocks. At the bottom of the spiral, the tunnel straightened out for a bit, then suddenly dropped at a steep angle. Gameknight leaned forward again, but wasn't

dropping as fast as the tunnel. That meant he was slowly getting closer and closer to the ceiling.

"You're getting too close!" Hunter yelled.

"I know, I'm trying to get lower, but I can't," Gameknight replied.

In the distance, they could both see the tunnel opened to a large cavern, but the User-that-is-not-a-user was getting closer and closer to the tunnel's ceiling.

"Try to slow down," Hunter said.

"I don't know how!" he replied, his voice sounding a little frantic.

*Don't panic, you're almost there...almost there*, he thought. *You're almost...*

SMASH...he crashed into the ceiling just as the tunnel opened to the large cavern. Hanging from the top of the large cave, Gameknight saw a chest suspended from a series of blocks. He reached out for the wooden box, but the impact with the ceiling had sent him spiraling off to the side; he missed his chance.

The bitter taste of failure filled his soul as he streaked through the chamber and headed down another tunnel identical to the one they'd just navigated. But this one had few turns or obstacles. It opened into the large spherical chamber where they'd originally spawned. Curving in a wide arc, he slowly settled to the quartz platform, grateful to have his feet on the ground again. Hunter landed right behind him.

"I missed it, Hunter," Gameknight moaned. "I missed the chest. There was probably some..."

"Gray wool," she said with a smile.

Reaching into her inventory, she pulled out the fuzzy block and handed it to Gameknight999.

"How did you get it?" he asked.

"When I saw you hit the ceiling, I ducked my head and soared up toward the chest. When the box opened, I figured we needed the block of wool, so I took it."

Gameknight gave a sigh of relief.

"Thanks," he said.

"Hey...we're a team, as always."

"As always," the User-that-is-not-a-user replied.

Walking around the platform, he found the pedestal that sat under a gray cube of glass. A small sign said *GRAY* beneath the glass. He placed the wool on the pedestal, then wiped his brow and stepped up to the edge of the platform.

**Twenty-eight minutes.**

"That took too long, Hunter," Gameknight said. "We gotta go faster."

"No problem," she said. "Let's do it."

The companions leapt off the platform and chose another tunnel, this time a red one. Gameknight took the lead, staying low in the tunnel. As they shot through the red passage like two winged bullets, they saw zombies on the floor of the round twisting corridor, their glistening claws reaching up as they passed. Both Hunter and Gameknight fired their bows as they flew by, their arrows piercing the decaying skin and causing the monsters to growl and moan in anger.

The User-that-is-not-a-user aimed his bow and fired at a zombie, but as he aimed, he also descended. The arrow missed the zombie, but the creature's razor sharp claws did not miss Gameknight. Pain erupted down his leg as the monster tore into him, causing his HP to decrease.

"You OK?" Hunter shouted.

"Yeah," he replied as he moved farther away from the bottom of the tunnel. He reached down and rubbed his leg. "We need to speed up!"

"But it will be too fast," Hunter said. "We can't shoot at the monsters if we go any faster."

"I don't care."

Gameknight put away his bow and pulled his arms to his sides, then leaned in, pushing himself faster. The passage banked and turned, but he focused on the route ahead. More zombies tried to reach up and hit him, but Gameknight focused on speed; that was his weapon, and that was how he would defeat Entity303.

They shot through the tunnel like boxy missiles, cutting corners and getting as close to the walls and floors as necessary. Soon, they saw the huge chamber at the end of the tunnel, Gameknight banked upward, trying to come as close to the ceiling as possible, he could feel his Elytra wings scrape against the blocks, but he didn't take any damage. Reaching out, the User-that-is-not-a-user easily opened the chest and took out a red cube of wool, then dove for the exit tunnel. In seconds, they were back to the central platform again.

"That was a lot easier that time," Hunter said.

But Gameknight did not answer. He ran around the platform, looking for the red glass cube. He put the wool in its place, then ran to the edge of the platform.

"Purple tunnel!" Gameknight shouted as he jumped off the platform, not waiting for Hunter.

"Wait!" she yelled.

But the User-that-is-not-a-user shook his head. He knew they had to go faster if they were going to complete all of these before the deadline.

The two friends shot through tunnel after tunnel, completing one passage after the next without rest. Blazes and spiders joined the assembly of monsters that tried to stop them, but Gameknight ignored him. His only focus was speed, blinding fast speed. But now the courses were beginning to get harder. Obstacles were appearing within most of the passages. Sometimes there were vertical columns of stone, or horizontal sheets of glass, or spiny cactus jutting out from the walls. No longer could they just focus on speed; now they had to also avoid the many objects that could cause a collision. Gameknight crashed into a cluster of cactus, taking damage and losing vital speed. Hunter collided with blocks of glass and was injured. As they progressed through all of the tunnels, they took more and more damage.

"You think we're going to survive this?" Hunter asked as she placed the trophy from the last tunnel, a green block of wool, on its pedestal.

"We don't have a choice," Gameknight replied. "There are only two more tunnels left, and..."

**Four minutes left...losers.**

He could just imagine the mocking laugh from Entity303, when he typed that message.

“Come on, there’s four minutes left,” Gameknight said. “We have two tunnels remaining and we gotta hurry.”

“I have a feeling these are the hard ones,” Hunter said as she followed her friend off the platform.

“We do the orange tunnel first, then the blue last,” Gameknight said as he climbed high into the air, then dove toward the tunnel.

“Wait, you’re going too fast!” Hunter shouted.

But the User-that-is-not-a-user ignored her. His only focus was speed, pure blinding speed.

He fell toward the orange tunnel, picking up more speed. At the last minute, he pulled up, narrowly missing the rocky edge of the passage. Streaking through the round passage, he curved and banked as he followed the tunnel. Blazes hid behind blocks and hovered near sharp corners to attack the unwary. They fired their balls of death at him, but he was so fast; the creatures of smoke and flame had little chance to even aim. He was like a living bolt of blue and green lightning, his clothing seeming to blend together as he went faster and faster.

SMASH.

He hit something, but never even saw what it was. Gameknight knew his health was dangerously low, but there was no choice; everything had to be risked to get through this course with enough time for the last one.

SMASH.

Another collision and more lost HP. But this time, the User-that-is-not-a-user saw what it was...glass panes. Entity303 had put panes of glass across the passage so that all he saw was the narrow end of the sheet. Fortunately, they were colored a light green and not clear. Transparent panes of glass would have been impossible to spot, but at these speeds, everything was difficult to see.

Leaning into a turn, he dove downward with the tunnel, picking up more speed.

*Green...*

He banked to the left, just missing a tall column of glass. Scanning the tunnel, he tried to will himself to go faster and faster.

*Green...*

He ducked just as he went under more glass. It felt as if his hair was shaved off a little. Watching carefully for the green panes, he leaned to the left and right as he avoided more of the obstacles. Thankfully, he could see the large chamber just at the end of the passage, but the sides of the tunnel were lined with dozens of blazes. The wheezing monsters turned toward him as he approached. Twenty fireballs streaked toward him, all of them intent on taking the last of his HP. Diving downward, he tried to fly under the maelstrom of flame. With his bow out, he batted at the fireballs that came close, deflecting them to the side.

Once he was past the monsters, he dropped the bow and reached up for the chest. As he grabbed the orange wool, more letters filled his head.

**Two minutes left...ha ha ha.**

Gameknight growled, then headed for the exit tunnel. He could feel his Elytra wings strain

under the blast of the wind, but he didn't have time to wait. Landing gracefully on the platform, he sprinted to the pedestal and placed the fuzzy cube in its place.

Not waiting for Hunter, he ran to the edge and jumped. With his wings extended, he dove toward the last tunnel. It was colored a sky blue, with a black stripe running down the center. He was certain this one would be the hardest, but he couldn't give it any thought, all his attention was focused on speed and dodging whatever lay in wait.

And then he saw the next obstacle; it looked like a gigantic dragon's egg. The dark ovoid was nearly as wide as the passage, with just the narrowest opening along one edge. Aiming for the slender gap, he shot through like a hawk diving after a field mouse. Right after the egg, the tunnel turned to the right. Because of the size of the obstacle, he didn't see the curve until the last second. Leaning with all his strength, he forced his wings to bank hard, straining their delicate fabric and stout frame; but it wasn't enough. Reaching out with his hands and feet, he cushioned the collision and pushed off the wall, completing the turn. Ahead, he could see another massive egg, a thin space at the top.

"I bet the tunnel goes down after that," Gameknight muttered to himself.

Carefully rising to the ceiling, he moved even faster as he tucked his hands to his side. As soon as he shot through the gap, he bent down, diving in the direction he thought the tunnel would go. If he was wrong, he was probably dead.

**One minute...isn't this fun!**

"I hate that guy," Gameknight growled as he dove.

Sure enough, the passage sloped downward in the opposite direction from the gap. Picking up speed, he banked to the left and right as he followed the blue passage, the black stripe like a blur as it shot past.

Suddenly, Hunter was at his side. He stole a quick glance and found her smiling, her wings cracked and bent.

"How we doing?" she shouted.

"Less than one minute."

"I figured," she replied, then stared straight ahead.

Another dragon egg blocked the passage, this one with a gap on the left side.

"After the gap, bank to the right," Gameknight said.

"You sure?"

He nodded.

Hunter didn't ask any more questions. She trusted him, and Gameknight knew it. But, of course, if he was wrong, then they were both in serious trouble.

They shot through the gap, one above the other, then turned to the right. Again, the tunnel curved in the opposite direction from the gap. Staying in the center of the passage, they moved faster and faster.

Gameknight smiled.

"I got you figured out, Entity303," Gameknight said in a low voice.

**Fifteen seconds...bye-bye village.**

Ahead they could see another dragon egg. This time the gap was on the right. Hunter steered to the side of the passage, making room for his friend. She fell back a little, giving Gameknight999 more room.

“Go to the left after the gap?” Hunter asked.

Gameknight thought about it. The massive dragon’s egg was getting closer.

*Should we go left?* he thought. *All the other times the curve of the tunnel was opposite from the gap. Would he do it again?*

The egg was getting closer.

“Gameknight, what’s the plan?” Hunter asked, her voice filled with uncertainty and fear.

*It seemed too obvious to go that way again, but was that what Entity303 wanted us to think?*

They were almost at the egg.

“Gameknight which way, which way?!” Hunter’s voice sounded frantic.

“RIGHT...RIGHT...RIGHT!”

If he guess was wrong, then they wouldn’t survive, and everyone in Crafter’s village would be destroyed.

They shot through the aperture, then banked hard to the right. When they were through, Gameknight smiled. The passage turned to the right as well, then straightened out; the large cavern visible at the end of the tunnel.

“We did it,” Hunter exclaimed. “Now all we need to do is collect that block of wool and we’re done.”

“But did you notice there were no monsters in this tunnel?” Gameknight asked.

“Leave it to the User-that-is-not-a-user to be disappointed because no monsters are nearby.”

She laughed as they shot into the large chamber and headed for their prize...the wooden chest hanging in the center. Suddenly, a cat-like yowl filled the air as a bright ball of flame shot right in front of the duo.

“GHAST!” Hunter yelled.

Gameknight banked to the left while Hunter turned to the right. Another fireball shot between them, the harsh light momentarily blinding them. Part of the fireball hit Gameknight’s Elytra wings, causing them to begin to burn. He spun out of control as one wing burned faster and faster, the blast of the wind feeding the ravenous flames.

He missed the chest. He failed!

With the wooden chest now completely out of sight, and both of them flying nearly out of control, his only choice was to head for the platform. The ghast gave them a baby-like cry and fired another fireball. Gameknight zigzagged and he headed for the exit, feelings of failure and despair filling his entire being.

The ghast let out one more feline cry, then receded behind them.

Gameknight was losing lift and was having trouble keeping level. He could feel the flames on his back licking ever so slightly at his skin. His shirt was probably starting to burn as the Elytra slowly disintegrated. With one last gasp, the wings reached out to ride on the flowing wind, then finally failed, and Gameknight’s fears were realized as he fell.

**Five seconds...good-bye losers.**

## Chapter 8

### The End

The User-that-is-not-a-user fell, tumbling through the sky.

#### **Four seconds...**

He smashed into the side of the central sphere upon which the starting platform was built. Gameknight reached out and grabbed the quarts blocks, then held on for his life. His feet dangled out into open air.

#### **Three seconds...**

Glancing down, he could see the impossibly distant bottom surface of the spherical shell; the drop would easily take the rest of his HP.

*Maybe I should just let go?* Gameknight thought.

“No!” he growled.

Thoughts flew through his head, images of Crafter when he’d first met him, the memory of meeting Stitcher in the Nether, Digger’s forgiveness over his wife...memory after memory flooded through his mind.

But then the letters appeared in his mind again,

#### **Two seconds...**

An overwhelming sadness filled his soul as he thought about never seeing his friends again. They had expected him to save them, and he’d failed. Now they would be destroyed by this hideous Entity303...all because of him.

More letters. This was the end

#### **One sec—**

And then silence.

Glancing up to the platform, Gameknight saw a huge array of beacons shining upward into the sky, each shaft of light glowing a different color. Carefully, he climbed up the side of the sphere and crawled to the safety of the flattened top. He found Hunter standing there, a huge grin on her face. She stood next to the blue wool cube, the blazing colored light of the beacons bathing the platform in a myriad of hues.

“It’s nice they put the signs here,” she said. “People too stupid to notice the colored glass will still know where to put the blocks.”

“You got the wool?”

“I got the wool!”

“YOU GOT THE WOOL!” Gameknight was overcome with joy. “How did you do it?”

“When the ghastr shot us and we were scattered, the blast of the fireball actually sent me colliding with the chest,” she explained. “When I hit it, I grabbed the chest and opened it, then

jumped off with our trophy in my inventory. I saw you crash into the quartz, but focused on landing and getting to the pedestal.” Her grin turned to an expression of fear. “I was afraid you were going to fall, but as soon as I placed the wool cube down, these beacons turned on and I saw you climb up.”

Gameknight was so happy he wanted to scream.

“So what now?” Hunter asked. “How do we get back home? I don’t trust that Entity303 guy. I want to see that the village is safe.”

“I bet we go in there,” the User-that-is-not-a-user replied, pointing at the beacons. “I’m just not sure if it’s completely safe.”

“I’ll let you know,” Hunter said.

With her cracked and damaged wings barely hanging off her back, she stepped into the field of beacons and disappeared.

“Hunter, are you there?” Gameknight shouted, but silence was the only reply.

Gritting his teeth, he stepped into the multi-colored light of the beacons. Instantly, his vision began to waver as he was transported to somewhere. The colored light became brighter and brighter, as if he’d been swallowed by a brilliantly lit rainbow. And then he realized what Entity303 had really wanted them to do. The wool blocks were not part of the rainbow; they were only the trigger that activated it. These beacons were the rainbow!

But why did Entity303 want him to turn it on. Was it that he was unable to do the course in the allotted time? And what did this rainbow do? Gameknight had the feeling that there were plans within plans here, and he couldn’t see Entity303’s real objective, not yet.

And as suddenly as the light had filled his vision, it went away, revealing a blue sky with a faint pinkish hue. Cows were mooing, chickens were walking nearby, *spy-chickens*, he thought and smiled.

“Hey, knuckle-head, how about you turn around,” a voice said from behind.

Gameknight turned and found he was standing in front of their village. That warm orange glow was gone; the lava overhead had completely vanished. NPCs were streaming out of the village, all of them cheering. Suddenly, Gameknight was knocked to the ground when Digger’s twin children, Topper and Filler dove into him, wrapping their thin rectangular arms around him and hugging him tight. They fell in a heap, laughing.

“Thank you Gameknight999,” a voice said from above.

Detangling himself from the twins, the User-that-is-not-a-user looked up and found Crafter staring down at him, his blue eyes shining bright.

“Again, you were there for us,” the young NPC continued, “and the crisis has been averted.”

Gameknight stood and tussled the twin’s hair, then moved next to Crafter. Hunter saw them and joined them, followed by Digger, Stitcher and Herder.

“The thing is, I don’t think the crisis is averted,” Gameknight said in a low voice. “Entity303 needed *us* to turn on those beacons for some reason. I think he used the lava to force us to do his dirty work because he couldn’t, but there is something else going on.”

“Always with the conspiracies,” Hunter interjected.

“Perhaps, but I’ve learned to trust my instincts,” he replied. “There is more to this than meets the eye, and Entity303 will be back. I think the game is afoot.”

“You are so weird sometimes,” Hunter said, then punched him in the shoulder.

“Come on, everyone, let’s celebrate!” Digger shouted. “Cake for everyone!”

Topper and Filler cheered, then ran back to the village, the rest of the NPCs following the twins.

The cake is a lie...and I’ll be back, Entity303 said through the chat. We have just begun our contests.

Gameknight999 glanced up to the sky and scowled at the words in his head, then turned and headed into the village, to celebrate life with his friends.

The End???

If you liked this story, go to [www.gameknight999.com](http://www.gameknight999.com) and check for more short stories about Gameknight999 and his friends. Please feel free to distribute this story to your friends, or students, or colleagues, or anyone you think might enjoy it. As long as you are not trying to make money with this story, I’m happy that you give it out to anyone and everyone.

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Keep reading and watch out for creepers.

Mark



## Gameknight999 Minecraft Network

Below is an image from the building server on the Gameknight999 Minecraft Network. This is a public Minecraft server made for kids and readers of my books. We don't tolerate bullying, cussing, stealing, griefing, or anything that hurts the community. As a result, people help each other, just as Crafter or Stitcher or Hunter or Digger or Herder would expect.

This server was setup by our server/plugin/Minecraft ninja, quadbamber. Check out his YouTube channel; it's called LBEGaming. He is a wizard with all things Minecraft and this server would not be possible without his hard work!

There is a Survival server, Creative server, KitPvP server, as well as others coming soon. Hopefully, by the time you read this story, we'll have an Elytra Perils server up and running, though we've made some changes to the game so that people can fly through the tunnels and see who has the fastest time. Elytra Falls was a map made by pi314159265358978, be sure to check out his YouTube channel, he has some really cool stuff there!

Here is an image from the Gameknight999 Minecraft Network. This is the Capital of the building server. It was made by our builders: Harrybamber, arp97, mr\_man12 and benma98.

The IP address for the Gameknight999 Minecraft server is: **mc.gameknight999.com**



*Gameknight999, Monkeypants\_271, and Quadbamber flying the Elytra Perils course*

Below is a video of myself, Monkeypants\_271, my son, Gameknight999, and the head developer of the Gameknight999 Minecraft Network, Quadbamber flying the Elytra Perils course that will soon be opening on the Gameknight999 Minecraft server. This is the actual game that we'll be using on the server. It was programmed exclusively for the Gameknight999 Minecraft server. Come race your friends when we have an Elytra Perils tournament. Watch for information and notices on the server news on [www.gameknight999.com](http://www.gameknight999.com) for the next tournament. Click on the link below to see the video, leave a comment, and enjoy!

Be sure to check out the newest version of Minecraft. Right now, it's version 1.10 and there's some really cool stuff in it. Upgrade to it and go find a bear to pet, they really like that, especially if their cubs are nearby. Then maybe build a terrifying castle with some lava blocks or use these new blocks for a monster grinder. There are so many things you can do in Minecraft, it's amazing, so upgrade and start creating! Check out the video of Gameknight, quadbamber and myself, Monkeypants, flying on the Elytra Flying server: <https://youtu.be/q4iih8BaaF0>.



# GAMEKNIGHT999 NOVELS



books 1-6

books 7-12

Gameknight  
in Spanish

Gameknight  
in French

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