

Setting: the customer service call center of a video game company. On the walls are posters advertising video games: Block Wars, Bulldozer Wars, Medieval Wars, Jungle Wars, etc. In the middle of the room is a table with a computer. Nearby is a large TV. Mary, a woman in her mid 60s, is sitting in a rolling office chair at the table. She has a headset on. She looks confused and annoyed. She is tapping a pen on the table.

MARY

I'm sorry, *sir*, but I have no idea how to build an infinite water source. You could...uh...I guess...dig a giant hole and wait for rain. (Listens) How in the *game*?... Oh, Uh...with the blocks?... (She leafs through a notebook.) Right. With blocks. Are you sure you really need the water source? ... (Listens) I know *people* need water, but this is... you know...a video game. (Listens) Listen kid, may I make a suggestion?... (Listens) Well, I'm going to anyway. Go outside. Look at the world around you. Talk to people in real life -- IRL!...(Listens) No, I'm not gonna transfer you to anyone. (Listens) My supervisor says I've reached my limit of transfers.

(Emily, Mary's supervisor, walks in. Her eyebrows raise as she hears the end of Mary's conversation. Mary notices her and changes her tone.)

MARY (continued)

And that's how you do it. Thank you for calling Game Central. (She disconnects.) Hi Emily. What brings you down to the lower regions?

EMILY (sitting down)

I have some good news for you.

MARY

You're getting me a chair with lumbar support?

EMILY

No, much better than that.

MARY

Transferring me to billing?

EMILY

Uh, no.

MARY

Making me employee of the year?

EMILY

Of course not! Mary, have you heard of reverse mentoring?

MARY

Reverse mentoring, um, is it a new race game where the cars go backward? No new games, *please*.

EMILY

What? No! Reverse mentoring is a new way for employees to work together. A junior employee mentors an old...a....more experienced one so the two can exchange knowledge and skills.

MARY

Exchange? I've been here twenty years. How long has my (air quotes) *mentor* been here?

EMILY

Well, for just a bit.

MARY

Wait! He's not one of the summer interns, is he?

EMILY

Hmm, I think he started around that time, but he's very experienced.

MARY

At what? Oh no. He's a gamer? No. Absolutely not. I cannot work with a gaming kid.

EMILY

You talk to gamers all day long, but you've never played the games. Tristan will explain to you why people like the games, what they get from them, where they get...

MARY

Tristan?! What kind of name is that?

EMILY

I don't know. A Gen Z name?

MARY

I don't need (air quotes) Tristan to tell me how to do my job. I know the games, and I have the manuals if I get a really hard question.

EMILY

I heard you when I came in. You didn't remember how to make an infinite water source. And then you were very rude with the caller.

MARY

He was very rude to me.

EMILY

We'll see what the recording says.

MARY

He was whispering during the rude part.

EMILY

Oh Mary. (She sighs.) You don't appreciate the games, so you don't appreciate our players. Our new premium direct phone help won't be successful if we don't value our members and love our games. You should play the games, learn to enjoy them, and understand them, so you can help the membership. Block Wars is wonderful and it challenges players' creativity. Infantry Wars is fast-paced and exciting.

MARY

I tried it once. I killed my whole team. I couldn't sleep for a week.

EMILY

Just meet Tristan. Talk to him. I'll take you off the phones for a bit so you two can get to know each other.

MARY

Get to know him? Why?

EMILY

So you can learn from him and develop a working relationship.

MARY

With a 25-year-old kid? We'll have nothing to talk about.

TRISTAN

Imma sit this one out.

MARY

I'll go get Emily.

TRISTAN

Yeah, don't.

MARY

Then say something.

TRISTAN (looking up)

Okay. Is it reality if the world is making a phone call?

MARY

What?

TRISTAN

You said "This is the world calling" for me to join reality. But it's not reality if the earth is making a phone call. What does the moon do? Videochat?

MARY

What were your parents thinking naming you (air quotes) Tristan?

TRISTAN (without looking up)

That I'd become a (air quotes mocking her) medieval knight.

MARY (sarcastically)

Well that worked out. (pause while she watches him) Why do you like playing games?

TRISTEN (finally looking up)

Why are you working for a gaming company when you don't like games?

MARY

What makes you think I don't like games?

TRISTAN

The way you clenched your hands and exhaled when she said play games. It's sus.

MARY
Sus?

TRISTAN
Yeah, I could tell you hate gaming bad.

MARY
I don't hate it. I'd just rather do real work.

TRISTAN
How is it not real work?

MARY
Helping kids so fixated on the screen that they lose track of reality doesn't do anything but make the world around them worse. They think that's all there is. Stopping them from doing that, getting them to step away from the games and look around them -- that's what would help make the world a better place.

(Tristan blinks and looks around him.)

TRISTAN (sarcastically)
Oh my god! You're right! I've been thinking I was in a world where I had to gather weapons or I'd lose the battle. Is this reality I'm in now? I'm gonna throw this phone right in the garbage.

MARY
That I'd love to see. You're one of them. You're gonna grow up hunched over because of all the time you spend on your phone.

TRISTAN
That's my problem, is it?

MARY
It's everybody's problem. People walk down the street and bump into you 'cause they're on their phones. In my day, people looked other people in the eye and talked to them.

TRISTAN
That was the middle ages, right? You gave people the evil eye?

MARY
Ha ha.