Levelling Down

Norman loved playing video games in his spare time. He worked for a gaming company, helping design new games. Norman became particular entranced by a beta version of a new game designed by a colleague, a young woman. It was a role-playing adventure, set in current times in a big city, where Norman's avatar was in management. The goal was to become CEO. As Norman eliminated competitors, he levelled up. His power increased, his strength.

And he felt his own power and strength increase at the same time! The game was impacting his real life, not just his imagination. Norman loved it! Especially his new muscles and improved stealth skills. He kept levelling up and then he was promoted to manager!

Sitting in his new office, as a manager he had time to think. He thought about the beta game he'd become obsessed with and which led to his success. He'd had friendly chats with the developer, they got along well. Now he supervised the developer. Was the developer interested in becoming unbelievably wealthy and powerful?

He was. Norman learned the beta version contained subliminal messaging, impacting the player after hours of game play. Impacting physically, exercising without realizing it, impacting emotionally, making the player more aggressive. Why had the developer done it? He said because it was fun. At least, at first. But he enjoyed watching Norman change. He felt a sense of real power.

Norman became uncomfortable, the more they spoke. He felt manipulated. Groomed. More so when, after dinner, they had sex. And when she moved in, the next day. And when she told him developers kinda owned players who devoted hundreds of hours to their work. While he kissed and licked her.

This was not how Norman thought his life story would turn out.

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