WoW Classic and the Death knell of my Youth

World of Warcraft was released on November 23rd 2003 and I was there for it. I pre-ordered the game at Electronic Boutique and picked it up at the midnight release party. Two guys walked into the store that night and asked if they had any copies that weren't spoken for, and of course they didn't. I remember thinking, "These idiots. Don't they know how huge this game is?" and boy did it ever live up to the hype.

WoW was the first mainstream MMORPG(Massively Multiplayer Online Roleplaying Game). The genre was popularized by games like Everquest, Asheron's Call, and Final Fantasy XI, but all those games appealed to niche audiences. The early MMO's were very difficult and punished failure. For example in Final Fantasy XI, if your character died and couldn't get resurrected by another player, you lost 8% of your current level's experience. In addition, you could only gain experience after level 10 by joining a 5 person hunting party. It took a group effort to gain levels, and all that could be undone by wandering too close to a monster when you were on your own.

WoW was the first MMO with gameplay tailored to be user friendly. If you died all you had to do was run back to your corpse. If an enemy player killed you, they couldn't steal any of your items (unlike in Everquest). To top it all off, it was developed and released by Blizzard Entertainment, a company that had a reputation for releasing games that were extremely fun and polished (Warcraft, Starcraft, Diablo).

The game launched and the community of players ballooned up to over 10 million unique players. Together we logged hundreds of millions of hours into this game. The player base has dwindled over the years but WoW still remains the most successful MMORPG of all time. Every few years after the game came out, there would be a rumor that a new MMO was on it's way, and that this new game would be the "WoW Killer", the game that finally dethroned WoW. Guild Wars 2, Wildstar, Final Fantasy XIV, Elder Scrolls Online... they all thought they'd be the WoW killer, and they all failed in that mission.

World of Warcraft has evolved an incredible amount over the last 16 years. The original game capped player experience at level 60, but every few years a new expansion pack was released, the level cap was increased, and the game changed. The Burning Crusade raised the level cap to 70, took players through the dark portal to an alien world, and introduced flying to the game. Wrath of the Lich King raised the level cap to 80 and took players to the continent of Northrend to face one of the most iconic villains in Warcraft lore (Arthas Menethil, The Lich King). Then the cap was increased to 85, then 90, and as of today the level cap is 120. That's double the levels from where we started. With every expansion, the game became less and less

recognizable from what it used to be and a good portion of the player base began to yearn for the days of old.

Blizzard heard their players, and on August 26th 2019 they released World of Warcraft Classic. It's just the original game with none of the modern bells and whistles. To say this game had a lot of hype around it would be an understatement. The servers went online at 3pm PST on August 26th and it was pure chaos. Millions of players logging into the game at the same time, scrambling past one another to try and kill the same level one creatures. Amidst all the lag and crowding and hard work, a familiar sensation was felt… we were having fun again. We were putting in hard work and getting rewarded for it. The game lived up to the hype and it dawned on us that maybe the "WoW Killer" was gonna be WoW Classic.

I dove back into WoW Classic as a gnome warrior, the most ridiculous class and race pairing. Warriors are the sturdiest and strongest class, and Gnomes are tiny little creatures with squeaky voices. It's a hilarious combination to be sure. I loved diving back into this game that had been such an important part of my youth. I quested, I died, I got into dungeon groups, I joined a guild. As much fun as I was having, I slowly but surely realized that I couldn't devote the kind of time to this game that I wanted to. That's when I realized what the real "WoW Killer" is… becoming an adult.

I'm married. I have a job. I have a dog. I go to school. I'm expecting my first child. The only way I could give WoW Classic the amount of effort I wanted to is if I ignored my other responsibilities. If I did that, yeah I'd be awesome in game, but I'd be a failure as a husband, a student, an employee, and an expectant father. That kind of guilt just isn't worth it. I've finally become that thing I swore I'd never be… a grown up.

Life is only gonna get more complicated from here. In 3 months I'll be a dad. In 7 months I'll be finished school and trying to get a job in my chosen field. Would it be nice to join a raiding guild that has Blackwing Lair on farm while my max level warrior gathers materials to craft Thunderfury, Blessed Blade of the Windseeker? Yeah of course it would, but you know what would feel even better? Investing in my relationship with my family, and becoming a max level dad with story time on farm.

There will always be video games. I can put down the mouse and keyboard for now and focus on my real life. Then one day, many years from now, when my kid is in school and my wife is bored with me and I have my career in place… maybe then I'll have time to jump back into World of Warcraft.

For those of you with less responsibility in life, enjoy classic my friends. Lok'tar Ogar.