

STAYING ALIVE

Written by

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Writing exercise with the following parameters:

Write a short story in screenplay format that leans heavily on dialogue, minimizing action.

Three of your favorite video game characters get stuck in an elevator. How do they react? What do they do? How do they get out?

Sample scenes with character in actual gameplay are provided below for reader reference.

Characters chosen:

Iron Man (Avengers Game - <https://tinyurl.com/2a7yh89c>)

Wheatley (Portal 2 - <https://tinyurl.com/7lpovi28>)

Parvati (The Outer Worlds - <https://tinyurl.com/efezi60g>)

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INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

The elevator doors open. PARVATI is standing at the rear wall with her back against it. She looks demurely at her feet, holding a small toolbox containing various gadgets.

IRON MAN enters, suited up in full armor. He turns to face the elevator buttons, putting his back to PARVATI. He pushes a button, the doors close, and the elevator resumes it's journey. Parvati looks up in awe.

PARVATI

(under her breath)

Eeeee! Tony Stark! Stay calm... stay calm.

IRON MAN

Sorry, what was that? Let me guess... want an autograph?

PARVATI

Oh... uh... no.. No... Nothing. Sorry. Just clearin' my throat...

IRON MAN

Right. Say... you got good taste in power regulators there!

PARVATI

Oh my gosh... Yes! The PR-1000! One of my favorite lil' tools!

IRON MAN

Yup. Invented it when I was 10. Made me my first million.

PARVATI

Hah... duhh! Silly me! Says right here, Stark Industries! Big fan Mr. Stark! Huge fan! My dad was a big fan too! Taught me all about your arc reactor tech. Spent lots o' time fixing failed units growing up!

IRON MAN

Failed units? Failed uni... How is that even...

(flips up face plate)

Look Ms.... what's your name?

PARVATI

Parvati Holcomb at your service sir!

IRON MAN
 Look Ms. Holcomb, I've never heard
 of a Arc Reactor just...

The elevator shakes abruptly and violently, then grinds to a stop. Iron Man and Parvati brace themselves against the wall. Iron Man's face plate slams shut.

PARVATI
 Ahhhh!

IRON MAN
 The ONE time I take the elevator
 instead of flying. Hang on kid!

The elevator settles and stops shaking.

IRON MAN (CONT'D)
 Hmm. Readouts show were not falling
 to our doom, so that's good! All
 the electronics in the control
 panel are unresponsive... that's
 not so good.

PARVATI
 Ooooh... well... if I... can pop
 over there and take a look Mr.
 Stark, I might be able to...

IRON MAN
 No need Ms. Holcomb! This whole
 elevator is probably built with
 Stark Tech. Well, I mean, that's
 not the reason were stuck.
 Obviously. Jarvis, I need the
 schematics for the elevator of the
 Baxter building.
 (beat)
 Jarvis?
 (beat)
 Hello? Jarvis?

A panel on the elevator ceiling whips open and WHEATLEY pokes through with quick fluid motions, attached to a hydraulic arm. Parvati ducks behind Iron Man as he raises his repulsors at the mechanical intruder.

WHEATLEY
 Whoa! Pointing your blue, glowy
 palms at me is totally unnecessary.

PARVATI
 Ahhh! Is that Jarvis?

WHEATLEY

Jarvis? What's a Jarvis? You know what? Doesn't matter. What matters is, I'm here to welcome you to orientation! So... welcome... to orientation!

IRON MAN

Kid, stay back! This might be some kind of new A.I.M. weapon!

WHEATLEY

Wait. This configuration... all wrong. First, no idea who you are shiny robot, but I salute you in solidarity! Your tech seems a bit outdated, but we don't always get to pick our assembly lines do we?

IRON MAN

Outdated tech?? Robot?? I'm not a robot! I'm...

WHEATLEY

Second. The human female does not match my profile. Tank top, check. Orange jumpsuit... no check. Leg braces... no check. Portal gun... mmmmm... nope. No check. Oh my. Not good. You are most certainly NOT the test subject.

PARVATI

Oooooh... aptitude tests and talking automechanicals! This is more exciting than a can of fresh Saltuna!

Recognition flickers across Parvati's face as she stares at Wheatley. She lets out an audible gasp.

PARVATI (CONT'D)

Are you a personality core? Never seen one of you in person!

IRON MAN

Please don't cozy up to the killer robot Ms. Holcomb. I got a history with that kind of thing.

WHEATLEY

Killer robot? Did they unseal my work records?

(MORE)

WHEATLEY (CONT'D)

One minor mishap while plugged into limitless power and they hold it against you forever. Hmph. Time to show management they chose the right robot for the job. With no further adieu, let me just tell you how honored I am to be your test subject caretaker!

PARVATI

Why it's an honor to...

IRON MAN

Sorry to burst your bubble, but we will never be your test subjects! What kind of twisted world domination scheme are you trying to hatch?

WHEATLEY

Hey hey! Looks like someone woke up on the wrong side of the charging station! Please stay calm shiny robot friend! This test is for human subjects only. We have a separate trial for our robot test subjects, but you'll need a partner to participate. And well... your programming doesn't seem to lend itself things like "partners", "friends", "acquaintances", "lovers"...

IRON MAN

We've had enough of these games! Open the elevator doors now or I will turn that orb of yours into slag metal!

PARVATI

Mr. Stark sir, I don't think...

WHEATLEY

Oh shiny robot friend, I'm terribly worried you'll pop a circuit if you keep it up. Not to be rude, but I'm on a tight schedule here so let's get started shall we?

IRON MAN

I told you...

WHEATLEY

Brilliant! So glad we moved on!

Wheatley turns to face Parvati.

Oi! Human female! The first test is simple: Escape this elevator! Designed it myself! First one in a long time. Best to start off small, you know? Don't do too much, too fast, might pull a servro? Now if you were a proper test subject, you would have a handy-dandy portal gun. Since you don't, I don't really know how your going to pass this test. Likelihood that you'll die just went up a bit. Say around... 100%?

IRON MAN
We're leaving. NOW.

PARVATI
Mr. Stark sir... maybe if we just...

IRON MAN
Stand back Ms. Holcomb!

PARVATI
But sir, I can...

Iron Man wedges his fingers in the crack where the doors meet. He gives it a mighty heave and it budes open slightly. A pulse of electric energy abruptly rushes out from the door and sends him flying towards the back wall, crashing against it.

WHEATLEY
You know, I could have built the door NOT to cause extreme harm if it's forced open, but that just seems like lazy test design. I mean, subjects would just walk right out! Test over! Just like that!

IRON MAN
Your going down robot! As soon as... uh... my system... reboots.

PARVATI
Sigh.

Parvati walks over to the button panel of the elevator and props it open with a tool. She starts using various tools to tinker around inside the housing.

PARVATI (CONT'D)
 (muttering to herself)
 Okay, just gotta bypass this wire,
 reroute this lil' guy here...

Iron Man raises one wobbly gauntlet toward Wheatley. The repulsor outlet on his palm starts to glow brightly.

IRON MAN
 Power restored to one arm! Say
 goodnight scrap bucket!

WHEATLEY
 So... I wouldn't do that.

IRON MAN
 Why not? Wanna surrender? Don't
 blame you.

WHEATLEY
 No... No... not that. It just uh...
 breaching the outer hull will
 immediately trigger the release of
 neurotoxins, killing your human
 friend. And I'll get bad marks for
 not complying with the company's
 "Kinder, Gentler" testing
 initiative.

(In corporate monotone
 voice)
 Article 10, Line Five- Test
 subjects shall not be exposed to
 lethal consequences until at least
 five successful test are completed.
 (normal voice)
 See? So you no pew pew pew, she
 stays alive, I get a good review.
 Win-win-win right?

IRON MAN
 Ugh.

PARVATI
 Hah! I got it!

Parvati hits the "open door" button on the panel. The elevator lights dim and Wheatley shoots out disco ball beams of light across the entire elevator interior. The song "Staying Alive" starts playing from his speaker. His body starts bopping along with it.

WHEATLEY

And we're stayin' alive, stayin' alive. Ah, ha, ha, ha, stayin' alive, stayin' aliveeeee...

PARVATI

(horrified)

Oh law!

Parvati reaches back into the box, jostles some cables, then hits the button again. The lighting returns to normal, as does Wheatley.

WHEATLEY

(still shaking off the programming re-routing)

Ah, ha, ha, ha, stayin...Ohhhhhhkay. What just happened?

PARVATI

Nothing! Nothing at all! Come on Mr. Stark! Time to go.

Parvati jiggles another set of wires, shuts the control panel door, and hits the door open button once more. This time the elevator dings and the doors slide open. Iron Man's suit finishes it's reboot and he awkwardly gets up.

IRON MAN

Nice work kid!

PARVATI

Oh gosh, Mr. Stark! That means so much coming from a smart fella like you! If only my dad could be here to see this!

WHEATLEY

That was impressive for a such an unremarkable looking human!

PARVATI

Well.. Mr. Stark was the inspiration really.

IRON MAN

Naturally. Go on.

PARVATI

He had a lil' ol hunch that the elevator had Stark tech. And you know what? He was right!

(MORE)

PARVATI (CONT'D)

I found an EF-230 module stuck in there and those things are well known for been mighty unstable.

IRON MAN

Okay... we doing this again? Really?

PARVATI

I just re-routed some extra juice through the power module to bypass the security routines and ping-ding! The doors open right up!

Parvati picks up her toolbox and walks out of the elevator. Iron Man looks at Wheatley.

IRON MAN

Don't. Go. Anywhere. I'm coming back with the full force of the Avengers. You and your so-called management have a lot to answer for.

Iron man quickly hovers out of the elevator. Wheatly extends his arm as far as he can towards the door and yells after them.

WHEATLEY

Wait! Stop! Your going the wrong way! Just... and yeah... already out of range. I guess I'll slink back to the management rail and meet them in the Turret Ambush room. Calculating their new odds and... nope. Still gonna die.

Wheatley retracts his body fully back up into the opening on the ceiling of the elevator and vanishes from sight.

WHEATLEY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Ah, ha, ha, ha, stayin' alive, stayin' alive...

The opening slams shut.

THE END