

CREED'S GREATEST HITS
by Dave Biscella

The light shone down on Fred and Dale from the enormous oversized television that hung on the wall no more than eight feet in front of the couch they sat on together. It has been shining down on them for hours, sitting together in each other's company like they do multiple times a week. Hours have passed without many words being shared between them. They've been too busy killing aliens in a co-op adventure of a video game they've beaten many times before. They don't need to communicate as they work their way through the levels. They've saved the world together so many times before that they always knew each other's next move. At this point it was all routine, but they still enjoyed it.

A giant light flashes outside that they catch out of the corner of their eye, followed by a loud crashing sound. The house shakes. Fred pauses the game and stands up. Another loud crashing sound is heard, this time louder, this time the house shakes even more.

"What's going on?" Fred asks confused as Dale stands up to join him. The light flashes outside again. They look outside the window, being sucked out of their video game coma and seeing the real world for the first time in hours. Another loud crashing sound comes as the neighbor's house they're now looking at explodes. Suddenly, the house next to it explodes. The lights and crashing sounds are becoming more and more frequent.

"What the fuck??!?" Dale and Fred scream in unison as they hurriedly rush over to another window. "Fred, what is happening?" Dale asks with a voice full of fear.

"I don't know!" Fred answers, pulling the curtains back on the window as they approach it, exposing a face on the other side of the window. They both scream and fall backwards. Staring at the face as it looked back at them with its big oval, solid black eyes. This wasn't a human

face. It was solid white, shaped like an upside down egg with two giant oval black eyes that were looking right at them as they were now on the ground looking up at the terrifying face.

Another crashing sound comes, this time louder, and closer than any of the others. A hole explodes in the side of Fred's house as a beam of some sort blasts into it, hitting Fred in the stomach and putting a hole in the floor that both Dale and Fred fall through, landing hard in the basement below them.

Dale gets up, trying to recover from the fall as quickly as he can. In pain, but somewhat relieved they're no longer staring the mysterious face in it's empty eyes. He rushes over to Fred and helps him sit up against the wall. Fred is now missing a piece of his torso, bleeding wildly. "Fuck, Fred. You're hit."

"Yeah," Fred struggles to speak. "They got me." He looks into his friend's eyes, knowing he doesn't have much longer, but somewhat comforted by the fact that his best friend is by his side. Their world is now filled with the crashing sounds, the blasts, the house shaking, the lights outside shining, and the screams of the humans in the neighborhood screaming for their lives.

"You're going to be OK. We're going to figure out a way out of this," Dale says, trying to calm Fred down as he finds an old shirt nearby and tries to stop the bleeding that is pouring out from inside his best friend's abdomen.

"No, I'm not." Fred says calmly, accepting his fate. "But you can still get out of this."

"No, I'm not leaving you." Dale answers, still frantically trying to stop the blood.

"You can stop this," Fred says, looking his friend in the eyes. "You need to get back upstairs..."

"I'm not going upstairs! Are you crazy?" Dale says in a tone that you speak to old people in when they say ridiculous things. "They're upstairs. I'm staying down here."

“No, you have to listen to me,” Fred struggles, the words becoming harder and harder to muster as he slowly bleeds to death. “You need to trust me. You can fix this.”

“What do you mean?”

“Upstairs, in my den,” Fred begins. “Go to the bookshelves where my CDs are stored and find Creed’s Greatest Hits.”

“OK. The blood loss is making you insane. You’re speaking nonsense now,” Dale says, trying to compose himself, still trying to stop the blood.

“Seriously,” Fred continues, staring deep into Dale’s eyes, begging for his trust. “You have to trust me. My family knew this day was coming. For generations we’ve had the tool that can beat them when they finally decided to invade.”

“What the fuck are you talking about?” Dale asked, his fear now being replaced with confusion.

“I come from a family of alien defenders, that’s why I’ve always been so much better at video games than you. That’s what I’ve been trained to do. For generations, my family has held the tool to fight them off when they came to attempt to take over our world. It was handed down to me as my father grew older. He passed down the responsibility of holding on to it to me, but now I’m too weak to enact it, so I need you to.”

Dale looked at his friend. He had no reason not to trust him, no matter how ridiculous this sounded. Fred was always a natural at any video game that required killing aliens, and he’d always wondered for years why his collection of 1000s of CDs ranging from Elton John to the bleakest of death metals included Creed’s Greatest Hits standing out like a sore thumb. But there was still doubt. “You’ve lost your mind.”

“Trust me,” Fred pleads. “I had to hide it somewhere that nobody would ever try to take it. So I need you to get upstairs and activate the tool that will save the world.”

It was clear Fred was going to die soon, and in all honesty, Dale realized he was likely going to as well. He had no choice but to believe his best friend. On the slim chance Fred isn't completely delirious, and that he can save the world by using the tool hidden inside Creed's Greatest Hits, he has to try. He has to go down trying to save the world. "OK. What do I do?"

"Thatta boy!" Fred says, smiling proudly with the little energy he has left. "Get up to my den, grab Creed's Greatest Hits, and take out disk one..."

"Creed's Greatest Hits is two discs?" Dale asks, thoroughly confused and surprised.

"The second disc is a DVD," Fred answers.

"OK, that makes sense."

"Take out disc one," Fred continues, "and put it into the stereo. Make sure it's turned up as loud as it can possibly go, and forward to track six and hit play. That will initiate the sequence."

Dale stares at his friend, putting a consoling hand on his cheek, accepting that this is the last time he will see him alive. "I got this, Fred." He stands up heroically and heads to the steps to go back upstairs. He takes a deep breath.

"Dale," Fred says weakly before he can put his foot on the first step on his way to save the world. "I love you."

Dale looks back at his best friend for years, thousands of memories running through his mind. He looks Fred in the eyes, "I know."

He turns and runs up the stairs at full speed, getting to the top of the steps. He screams as he encounters a handful of bodies that all have the same face they stared down through the window just a few moments ago. He grabs the nearest thing he can find and throws it in their direction as they initiate more blasts towards him. He dodges them and makes his way to the den, shutting and locking the door behind him.

The blasts and crashing sounds and screams are deafening, but Dale knows he has to focus. He rushes to the book shelf, frantically locating and grabbing Creed's Greatest Hits among the thousands of CDs that were thankfully organized alphabetically in the most anal of ways. Opening up the cardboard packaging and unfolding it, he finds disc one, takes it out and lets disc two and the rest of the packaging fall to the floor. Hurrying over to the stereo. Turning the knob for the volume as far over as it will go, he puts the disc in and puts on track six as instructed. He hits play and breathes a sigh of relief. He'd actually done it. He was saving the world.

"When dreaming, I'm guided to another world..." Scott Stapp's voice begins to whine loudly from the speakers. Dale takes a step back and soaks it in. In this moment, all he can hear is what's coming out of the stereo. He has somehow managed to block out the sounds of the world ending around him. He lets out a small smile and approaches the window to see if his heroic actions have made a difference outside.

Dale pulls back the curtain and one of the faces is on the other side. Before he can let out a scream or even a gasp, there's another blast, blasting through the wall and into his abdomen, knocking him back and slamming him against the wall.

This was it, and he knew it. He, like his best friend Fred, was dying tonight, right now, in this house. "So let's go there..." Scott Stapp's voice begins to build up with his band backing up the emotion in his voice with their instruments. "Let's make our escape..."

Dale suddenly feels a vibration in his leg. He realizes it's not just his body giving out on him, but that's it's coming from his phone that's been in his pocket this whole time. He uses the little energy he has to reach into his pocket and look at the screen to notice that it was vibrating due to a text message being received from Fred. He opens the text message and reads it aloud.

“LOL. Higher by Creed will be the last song you hear as you die. #GotYou #GotYouRealGood #WasntLyingWhenISaidILovedYou” Dale smiles and chuckles, “You fucking asshole, Fred.”

He lays his head back against the wall, smiling and laughing, closing his eyes for what he knows will be the last time. Still blocking out the sounds of the world ending around him. The only sound he hears as he slowly fades away from existence is the sound exploding from the speakers next to him.

“Can you take me higher? To a place with Golden Streets....”