

From Powerline – The Story of Me, Mario, and your Mom

By Don Zolidis

ORVIS, female-presenting, working a call-in help line for video games.

TOLLIVER, male-presenting, calling in with a problem.

The Phone rings. Orvis answers it confidently.

ORVIS

Powerline, this is Orvis. You come seeking answers, my child. I shall provide them.

She puts the receiver to her chest and speaks to Gilbert.

You need to establish an aura of omnipotence. It helps create a sense of hero worship which makes their brains malleable.

Lights up on TOLLIVER, on the phone. Tolliver is in the basement and has only a tiny light illuminating them.

TOLLIVER

Orvis? Is that you?

ORVIS *(to Gilbert)*

Oh dang it.

TOLLIVER

I'm so glad you answered! I'm having a really hard time right now. I'm in a dark place.

ORVIS

In the game?

TOLLIVER

Yes but I'm also in the basement. It's very dark here. Smells a bit rank. Maybe I should turn the lights on.

ORVIS

What game are you playing? Is it Metroid?

TOLLIVER

It's always Metroid. You know me so well.

ORVIS

Right.

TOLLIVER

I didn't even need to say anything, and you just knew. It's like we exist on the same mental level.

ORVIS

I don't know about that.

TOLLIVER

There's a psychic link between us, you know? I'm in a dark place, I'm fighting aliens, and you know all about it. You know so much.

ORVIS

So... what's going on in Metroid?

TOLLIVER

Metroid is a metaphor for my soul, Orvis. A metaphor.

ORVIS

And what's happening in the metaphor I can help you with?

TOLLIVER

I am a lone super soldier in the vast darkness of space. You know that about me. And all around me, wherever I look, are deadly monsters trying to eat through my spacesuit and kill me. You know that, right?

ORVIS

Is there a specific item that you're looking for?

TOLLIVER

Oh I'm looking for all the items. But all the items in the game aren't worth a good guide. You're my guide, Orvis. You're the guide of my soul.

ORVIS

Um...

TOLLIVER

I can't keep up this ruse anymore! I'm not calling about Metroid. I'm calling about *us*.

ORVIS

Oh great.

TOLLIVER

I knew you would see it the same way!

ORVIS

That was more of a sarcastic great.

TOLLIVER

Think about it: You and me, together, traveling the universe of our minds, fighting alien beasts... we'd be unstoppable. Because we'd fight the alien beasts *of life*. Like when my boss tells me that

I haven't been doing my work for the past month because I've been staring off into space and wistfully sighing about you, and now I'm fired, we could fight her together!

ORVIS

Uh...

TOLLIVER

Or when the police pull me over because I've been driving erratically down the interstate, you'd be at my side! Blasters ready! You could fling me out of the car window like a rolling explosive sphere and I would destroy our enemies! It would be glorious!

ORVIS

I'm actually in a committed relationship right now.

TOLLIVER

That's not a problem. I will help you get rid of them.

ORVIS

I don't want to get rid of them.

TOLLIVER

I have little space mines, I have a blaster, I have the super jump, I am basically unstoppable! We can do anything! No matter what our parents or the school or law enforcement officials believe! Join me. You are my space muffin.

ORVIS

I am not your space muffin!

TOLLIVER

YOU ARE MY SPACE MUFFIN.

ORVIS

I WILL NEVER BE YOUR SPACE MUFFIN!

Short pause.

TOLLIVER

Oh I see. Oh that's it, then? You're just casting me out like some much useless cargo. I will drift into the vast emptiness of the void, untethered to my guide, awaiting the eventual death of my power suit. A sad lonely end for a sad lonely space commando.

Pause.

I don't hear you crying. I just said something very sad, it should create an emotional reaction in you.

ORVIS

I'm not crying because I'm not having an emotional reaction.

TOLLIVER

You're heartless! I'm so glad I never got involved with you! Best decision of my life!

ORVIS

What?!

TOLLIVER

All my friends told me you were bad news!

ORVIS

Your friends don't even know me!

TOLLIVER

They know you well enough! And they said you weren't worthy of my time!

ORVIS

You live in a basement and play Metroid all day, you'd be lucky to be with someone like me!

TOLLIVER

Nope! Too late! You had your chance! You're not getting with this!

ORVIS

I want to love you!

TOLLIVER

NEVER! YOU AREN'T WORTHY!

ORVIS

LET ME PROVE MY LOVE!

TOLLIVER

TELL ME WHERE THE SUPER JUMP BOOTS ARE ON LEVEL 4!

ORVIS

THEY'RE BENEATH THE THIRD ROCK ON THE SECOND STAGE!

TOLLIVER

THANK YOU!

She hangs up.

Orvis takes a deep breath, turns to Gilbert.

ORVIS

Most of the calls go like that.