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Dream Machine

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There was once a boy who liked to dream big. He was devoted to his hobbies and he figured his hobbies were devoted to him. The boy wanted to play golf for a living and the people around him thought he could if he put his mind to it. He got lessons from local professionals who taught him how to truly play the game. He learned how to curve the ball in mid-air, bunt it along the ground so it skipped like a flat rock on water, and lob it in the air as if it were a bird in flight. He could close his eyes and imagine each hole's twists and bends, whether he would curve the ball right in this situation or left in that. When the boy knew he was going to play the next day he could barely sleep at night. He wanted more than anything to play the game endlessly for the rest of his life.

But, one day the boy found himself not wanting to leave the house. It confused and frightened him just a little. He was supposed to love golf, yet whenever he had plans to go out and play he found himself making excuses as to why he couldn't go. He became frustrated with his swing, his inability to make his body do what he wanted, and the impossible task of feeling out every imperfection in his game. He felt the inability to improve grip his heart, and a warm anger bubbled up underneath. It frustrated him, nagged at him. He swore off the game, but every few months he would be dragged in by the past's promise of achievement. His muscles strained in an attempt to simply relive the success he had felt years ago. His family, so supportive of his dream, was now a nightmare that kept reminding him of his failure to succeed. How could they not understand that his failure had crippled him-it was no longer his dream. Had they not seen his devotion? Had they not seen how hard he had tried? The boy no longer wanted to dream that dream, but that was all right, because now all he wanted to do was play computer games.

He was a boy who dreamt big and figured his hobbies were devoted to him. He wanted to play computer games for a living and believed in his ability to do so. He watched countless hours of professional replays that taught him how to play DOTA. He learned the game's mechanics. He learned which strategy could counter which. He learned how to read his opponent and how to get inside their head. He mapped each finger to a key so that he could play the game in his sleep if he wished. Each rank he climbed felt like he was unlocking a piece of himself. The more he improved, the more it felt as though he was ascending a tower to an enlightenment he could almost taste. He hadn't remembered that this was the same sensation he had felt when golfing so long ago.

Two years after the boy began playing, he quit one hobby for another. The bitterness of his struggle, the frustration of stagnated progress, the punishment of his every mistake; it was all too much for him. He began to think that there was a barrier between him and those who were talented. He began to wonder why he could not ascend to their level of success and found only himself to blame. He found that his broken dreams brought him nothing but despair and destruction. He wondered how much he could have accomplished in the time that he had wasted.

He was a boy who dreamt. He wanted to be the best at something. He 41 figured that he would go to college and find inspiration there, but all he found were others like him. Other people who were better, other people who were worse, and all shades in between. He found people defined by their college days and people who were yet to be defined, people who were wrong and people who were right, people who were lost and people who were found, people who were unique and people who were similar, and people and people and people and people. There was no end to the dreams people dreamt and he decided that it had been vain of him to believe in his ability to succeed where they had failed.

The boy no longer wanted to dream and so he gathered up all dreams, those big and those small, those that were too outrageous to speak allowed and those that were pitiful, and brought his dreams to the Dream Machine. The Dream Machine accepted them with loving arms, took the dreams off his heavy hands and lived them out for him. It dreamed enormously, fantastically, emphatically, spectacularly, in ways that he could have never imagined. A well of emotion spilled over within the boy's chest and burst outwards. He laughed with himself, dancing and crying at the same time, tears streaming from his reddened eyes. Never had he considered that his dreams could be so beautiful and so grand. His world erupted in front of him in gorgeous full-bodied colors. These were dreams that he could taste, that he could touch, a torch aflame that would never be extinguished. He watched all his wildest fantasies come to glorious fruition and he lived vicariously through them. Free of his dreams the boy emerged from the Dream Machine, ready to live life.