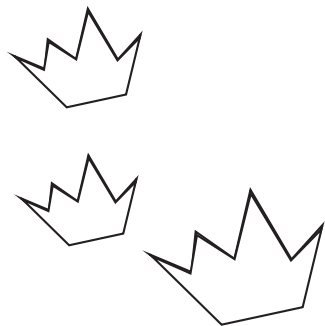


CLAW CASTLES 3: EPIC FAIL



EVAN JACOBS



MEET THE




KYLE

Age: 11

Favorite Food: potato chips

Biggest Secret: doesn't brush his teeth
before bed

Pet Peeve: dogs wearing sweaters

Best Quality: resilience

CHARACTERS



“ABBY”

Age: 11

Favorite Food: macaroni and cheese

Biggest Secret: enjoys listening to classical music

Favorite Hobby: shooting things with her slingshot

Best Quality: always has good timing

1 FIRST FAIL

“That was close!” Jake smiled.

He was playing *One Castle*. His best friend, Kyle, was there. Abby McQuade was over too. They were in Jake’s living room.

The kids had just dodged a *liongator*. It was half-lion, half-alligator.



Jake and Abby were new friends. They used to fight about everything. *Clan Castles*

changed all that. Jake and Kyle had been playing. The game went crazy. It came into the real world. Abby helped them beat it.

Erik van Syke helped too. He made the first *Clan Castles* game. They all worked as a team. Together they beat King Nojra and Prince Robo. These were evil twin brothers. They were half-men, half-dragons.

That was the second adventure. Another happened before it. Jake and Kyle had been playing *Clan Castles*. The game sucked them in! They beat all 99 castles. Then they defeated King Nojra.

They were still fighting Nojra and Robo. This time it was in *One Castle*. The game was fun. It was Van Syke's new project. He had given them an early copy.

"Yes! Level 20! I am on fire!" Kyle pumped his fist in the air.



“Stay focused,” Abby said.

One Castle took place in a single castle. There were 100 levels. Each one moved up a floor. They went all the way to space. Every level was harder than the last.



You could leave the castle too. Players could explore around it.

Jake, Kyle, and Abby didn't have time for that. They were too busy. Crazy animals were trying to kill them. So were Nojra and Robo.



The kids played on Kyle's iPad. Each player controlled a section. They took turns. But they also worked together.



"Hey," Kyle said. "A chess game!"

Everyone looked at the screen. There was a blue chess board. On one side stood their characters. These looked just like them. Regular pieces were mixed in too.

The pieces on the other side were different. One looked like Nojra. Another was Robo. Some were weird animals.

"Good thing we know how to play." Jake smiled.



“Yeah,” Kyle said. He checked out the board.



Kyle liked chess. His turns took forever though. He thought about his first move carefully. Then he planned his next move too.

Jake and Abby watched him. Five minutes went by.

“Come on, Kyle,” Jake said. “Better move soon. Before Erik van Syke makes a new game!” He laughed.

“Shh!” Kyle snapped. “This is important.”

Kyle touched the screen. His character

moved. It was quickly stopped. A *spiderfly* jumped out. It spun him into a web.



Then Kyle disappeared from the board.
He had to start over at Level 1.

“You jerk!” Kyle yelled.

“What did I do?” Jake asked.

“I wasn’t ready yet. You rushed me!” Kyle turned off his iPad. “Forget this,” he sighed. “I’m going home.” Then he left.

“You did rush him,” Abby said. She picked up a bag. It was long and skinny.

Her archery set, Jake guessed. Abby liked slingshots. But her aim was better with a bow and arrow. She started taking lessons after *Clan Castles* came into the real world.

“You’re leaving too?” Jake asked.

“Yeah,” Abby said. She opened the front door. “My lesson is in ten minutes. You should text Kyle. Tell him you are sorry.”



2 THE UPDATE

Jake got up early the next morning. There were no new messages on his phone. It was no surprise. He had not apologized. Kyle was being a baby.



No messages!

He tapped the *Clan Castles* app. It was the same as the Xbox game. But it was on his phone.

The game opened. Then it closed. It started to update.



Updating . . .

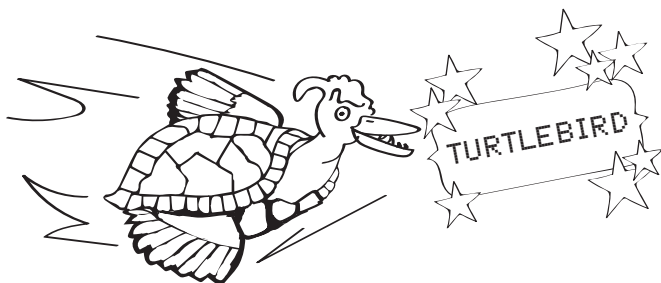
An update? That's weird, Jake thought. GLive never said anything about this.

GLive was a game company. It was the biggest one ever. The company had bought *Clan Castles* from Erik van Syke. Jake followed them on social media.

Updates were good. They put cool new stuff in the game. *What would this one have?* Jake could not wait to find out.

The update finished. Jake opened the game again. His character stood in a green field.

Jake looked for a weapon. He needed one fast. The game might have stranger animals now. Food and gold would help him too.

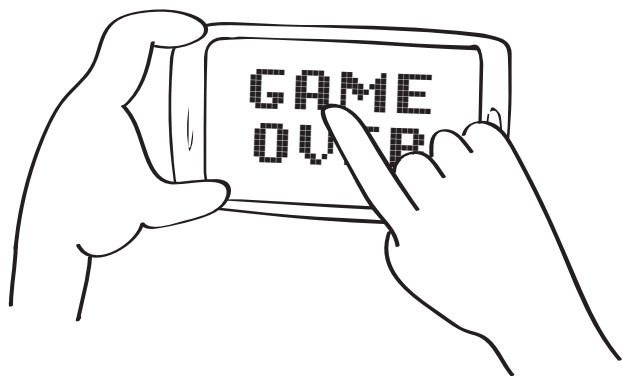


A *turtlebird* flew down. It came out of nowhere. The animal was half-turtle, half-bird. It picked Jake up. Then it dropped him. He fell on a big pile of rocks.

“What?” Jake said. The game started over.

He played again. His character barely moved. Another turtlebird flew in. It grabbed him. Then it dropped him on the rocks.

“Come on!”



Clan Castles was different. It was really hard. When you lost, it got harder. Something was not right. Jake turned off his phone. He would figure it out later. Right now it was time for school.



Jake didn't see Kyle until lunch. Kyle was playing *Clan Castles*. Other students watched. They stared down at his iPad.

Kyle wasn't having any trouble. The game seemed easy for him. Turtlebirds were too slow. Liongators could not catch him. He beat everything that came his way.

"That was sick, Kyle!" one student said. "You're crushing it."

"You're already at Level 50!" said another.

Level 50? Jake didn't believe it. He couldn't get past Level 1. The first part alone was too hard. *How is Kyle doing it?*

The bell rang. Kids headed back to class.
Kyle paused his game and looked up.

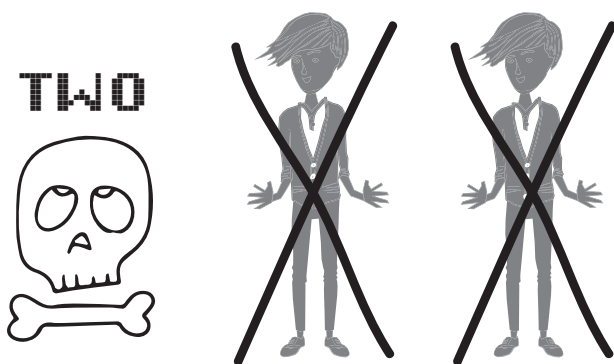
“Hi,” Jake said.

“Hey.” His friend smiled.

Kyle didn’t seem mad anymore. That made Jake happy.

“You’ve got the new game? Looks like you’re killing it.”

“Yeah,” Kyle said. “It’s pretty easy. Kind of a letdown.”



“Easy?” Jake asked. “I got killed this morning. Twice. In like five seconds.”

“Maybe you shouldn’t rush through it.” Kyle shrugged and started to walk away.

“I didn’t rush!” Jake called after him.

Kyle didn’t answer. He just kept walking. Soon he was out of sight.

Jake’s phone buzzed. Class was about to start. But maybe it was Kyle.

“Come over as soon as you can! –EVS,” the message read.

EVS? Jake had to think. Then it clicked. *It must be Erik van Syke!*

Van Syke wanted to see Jake. Did this mean they were friends? He hoped so. Maybe Van Syke had tips for the update. Jake couldn’t wait for school to let out.

CLAN CASTLES 3: EPIC FAIL

Beating *Clan Castles*
takes teamwork. But
nobody said whose team
I have to be on . . .




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