

By Niko

In Love with a Cube

I woke up in my small bedroom to a cool female voice. “Hello, and welcome again to the Aperture Science Enrichment Center. I am the Genetic Lifeform and Disk Operating System, but you can call me GLaDOS.” Dazed, I thought about getting myself a glass of water, but before I could reach for my mini fridge, the cool voice of GLaDOS came back. “The door will open, and testing will begin in three, two, one.”

The door to my room swung open, and I stumbled through, knowing that GLaDOS, the artificial intelligence robot that controlled the entire facility, could easily kill me if I didn't follow her instructions. In the hallway outside my room, only one door was open. I staggered towards it, with the announcements of “Please continue to the testing area” resonating through the corridor. Upon passing through the door at the end of the hallway, I found myself in what I recognized as a test chamber. I recognized all of the unique features of GLaDOS's test chambers. The bland white walls, a companion cube dropper to my left, and a cube receptacle on a ledge to my right — I recognized it all.

I knew from my previous testing experience that I would have to pick up the cube, carry it over to the receptacle, and hopefully, the receptacle would open the exit door. I decided to give my plan a try. I walked over to the companion cube dropper. It looked simple: a small push button on the wall and a hole in the ceiling where the cube would be dropped from. I pressed the button. It produced a small beep, and a companion cube dropped from the hole in the ceiling. I grabbed the chair-sized cube and began to carry it to the receptacle. At this moment, GLaDOS's voice came over the loudspeaker.

“Please test faster. You are going too slow.” At that moment, while I was walking over to the cube receptacle, I realized that I had never really seen what one of these cubes looked like. While I used to think the cube was of a simple construction, upon further examination, I discovered that the cube I was holding was much more than that. The edges of the cube had a few scratches on it, probably from previous use. Each side of the cube had a circle etched into it, and inside each of the circles there was a pink heart.

The specific cube I held had a small dent in one of the corners, just about the size of my index finger. It was when I put my finger on this dent that I felt the texture of the cube. The cool, smooth metal of the cube felt sleek on my fingers. Suddenly, the loudspeaker crackled to life.

“Stop sitting there and continue testing!” It was at this moment that I realized that I had stopped moving toward the receptacle and was staring at the cube. Suddenly, I felt that there was something more to the cube than I had originally thought. I was now filled with a longing for the cube. I wanted to take the cube with me as I tested. It was the only comfort I had amongst the constant berating of GLaDOS. Reluctantly, I picked up the cube, and placed it in the receptacle. I heard a small chime as the exit door slid open.

“Great job. Please proceed to the next test chamber.”

“Ok, cube, I’m going to take you with me. Me and you are going to get out of here together.” I picked up my cube and crossed the room towards the exit door. I was about three feet away from the door when suddenly my cube disintegrated in my hands! The only thing I had for comfort was floating away in millions of tiny specks. I couldn’t believe it. My only companion in this world of solitude was gone in a fraction of a second. I was forced into the next test chamber by GLaDOS and tested alone for the rest of my life.

Born to Test

The Genetic Lifeform and Disk Operating System was first activated on Aperture Science's first annual bring your daughter to work day. Upon her activation, GLaDOS immediately obtained an immense desire to control the entire facility and immediately killed everyone in the facility.

After GLaDOS put herself in charge of the facility, a part of her programming automatically activated, which gave her an incredible urge to put test subjects through a series of tests. After her killing spree, only three test subjects survived. One of which was a young woman named Chell, a daughter of a now-dead Aperture Science employee. Chell became trapped in the facility when her father brought her to Aperture for a tour of the facility. Due to GLaDOS's newfound urge to test, she decided to wake Chell up from her relaxation chamber and put her through one of the testing tracks. This particular track was GLaDOS's favorite, as it was the track which involved cubes and buttons.

GLaDOS especially enjoyed watching test subjects interact with these objects. GLaDOS turned on the lights in Chell's chamber, opened her door, and announced over the loudspeaker that it was time for her to begin testing. She watched as Chell rolled herself out of her bed, put on the Aperture Science-issued orange and white jumpsuit, and stumbled her way to her door. GLaDOS guided Chell through the narrow hallways until Chell reached the entrance of the testing track. After several introductory tests, mostly explaining to Chell how buttons and doors work, GLaDOS guided Chell into the first room with the use of a companion cube. The test was a simple one, designed by GLaDOS herself. All the test subject had to do was pick up a cube in one corner of the room and place it on a small cube-shaped receptacle to unlock the exit door to the next chamber.

"Okay, begin testing now," she told Chell over the loudspeaker. GLaDOS watched Chell as she looked around the test chamber, taking in the cube, receptacle, and exit door. After a few

seconds of thinking, Chell appeared to find the solution. She walked over to the cube and picked it up. GLaDOS then watched Chell carry the cube over to the receptacle. She placed it on the small square indent, and the door slid open. Now that the door was open, GLaDOS reasoned that Chell wouldn't need the cube anymore. GLaDOS destroyed the companion cube, and it dissolved in a cloud of small particles. When Chell looked up at the security camera mounted above the exit door, GLaDOS told her, "Don't worry. We have thousands of these. There are plenty more for you to test with. Please proceed to the next test chamber." With that, Chell walked through the door, and that moment was never thought of again.

Breakout

The space between test chambers spans as far as you can see. You run through the empty catwalks, passing test chambers on your left and right. A few minutes ago, while GLaDOS was busy repairing a broken elevator, you managed to pry one of the floor tiles loose in one of the test chambers and drop down to a small crawlspace below.

From there, you were able to crawl out from under the test chamber and onto a nearby catwalk. Having no sense of direction, you have been wandering among the catwalks for some time now. Eventually, after several more minutes searching for a way out, you turn a corner to find a large, heavy industrial-style door. The door automatically slides open as you approach it. Past the door is what appears to be a small intersection of four hallways. On your left, a door is marked "Turret Manufacturing" and a large yellow sign stating "WARNING: Live turrets: Do not enter" In front of you is a door marked "Neurotoxin Production," accompanied with another yellow sign, this time with "Biological Hazard" printed on it. The third door to your right is marked "Cube Manufacturing." As that door seems to be the least hazardous and the least creepy, you pass through the door on your right.

Upon entering the other side of the door, you find yourself in a large room containing many machines. Straight ahead of you, on the other side of the room, is another heavy door marked "EXIT." You begin to walk towards the exit door, but as you pass the first set of machines, you decide to take a quick look at them.

Four metal panels, each suspended from a rail on the ceiling, are lowered into a cube shape, in what appears to be the start of the assembly line. These sheets of metal are then moved on their rails to a set of robotic arms, which moved around the plates and welded each edge together. Then, the cubes are released from its track and onto a conveyor belt, where you see them move to the next machine with more robotic arms.

These arms weld the corners together. From there, the cubes enter a machine which is closed on the outside, so you can't see what is going on inside. However, due to the steam coming out of the top, you predict that the machine cools the cubes down from the hot welding material. From there, you see the cubes being picked up by the rail on the ceiling rail and carried over to a button receptacle, just like you have seen in the test chambers. You observe the buttons being lowered down onto the receptacle, and each time a cube touched the receptacle, a green light would flash, and the button was raised up again, only to be carried through another opening in the wall. The entire assembly line is a seamless process; not once do you see any irregularity among the cubes or the machines.

Suddenly, you remember when you were using these cubes on your testing track before you escaped. While you were testing, the cubes were just there as a prop to help you in testing. Now, you realize the immense perfection that goes into making one of them. You realize that these cubes aren't a mere prop; they are the result of incredibly orchestrated precision. A sharp thud jerks you out of your thinking. You realize you have just walked into the exit door while deep

in thought about the cubes. You take a step back, the door opens, and you continue finding a way to escape the facility.