

WHY VISUAL EFFECTS IS CRUCIAL IN VIRTUAL REALITY?  
**THE SCOPE AND FUTURE OF VFX IN VR.**





# INTRODUCTION

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Virtual Reality is known for its impeccable immersive experience. But think about this. If the distinctive world to which virtual reality transports you is not appealing enough, will you care to be immersed in it? Absolutely not. This is where lies the importance of visual effects. Transporting users to a different world altogether is indeed an art. But making them stay there is an even greater skill! On that note, let us take a look at some of the VR experiences that has made best use of visual effects. In all possibilities, these experiences could be how we look at entertainment in the future.

## 'Ascend the Wall' - Game of Thrones VR experience

The magnitude of television shows can be divided into two - Game of Thrones and the rest! Perhaps the biggest explorer of visual effects over the last 7-8 years has been this amazing show. In the initial seasons a single episode of Game of Thrones had an average budget of \$6 million and it rose up to \$10 million for the sixth season. Now, it is speculated that the final six episodes of the series will cost \$15 million each. Along with the fanbase, Game of Thrones has also expanded its production budget!

In its second edition of Game of Thrones exhibition in New York City, the team had an interesting attraction on store. The experience named 'Ascend the Wall', provides visitors a virtual reality tour to the enormous structure that safeguards the seven kingdoms from wildlings and the army of the dead. HBO partnered with 'Relevant' for this virtual reality experience that makes use of Oculus Rift technology and by wearing an Oculus Rift headset, users were able to take on a wooden lift ride at the Castle Black.



SOURCE : [FRAMESTORE](#)



The higher the elevator goes, the colder it gets. Upon reaching the top, users are asked to turn around. Stare straight and you will find yourself moving forward while panning to the left or right would slow your progression. Finally, you would reach the cliff of the wall, that is positioned 700 feet above the land (Just don't do what Tyrion Lannister says he would do on reaching the top). As you enjoy the panoramic glimpse of the vast Westeros beyond the wall, you would hear a much familiar sound- the horn of the Night Watch. What does that mean? Of course GOT fans will know; trouble! And when the trouble alarm is triggered, the elevator will start its shaky, exhilarating descent. Congrats, you have now stayed alive in the Game of Thrones world more than what plenty of characters have managed to!

## Martian - VR Experience

Matt Damon was lost somewhere (yet again) in the Ridley Scott 'Martian' that released in 2015. It was Hollywood's responsibility to bring him back home yet again. Matt can never get enough of losing his way, can he? It happened in Saving Private Ryan, ditto in Interstellar and here again in Martian.



SOURCE : [UPLOAD VR](#)

Okay, now what if, you as fans got a chance to know what it feels like to be isolated? That is exactly what the 'Martian' team provided with their unique VR experience. Viewers could step into the shoes of Mark Watney and perform tasks to ensure his survival. Elon Musk is already planning to take human civilization to Mars. But, through Martian VR experience, you could have a piece of Mars before that. Fly on the surface of Mars, navigate at zero gravity or steer a rover over caters through this amazing immersive environment. Furthermore, you could also relive some of the key scenes of the film in a complete 360 degree virtual environment. The experience is executively produced by Ridley Scott and directed by the renowned special effects artist Robert Stromberg. The project was accepted into the New Frontier Program in Sundance and received Cannes Silver Lion in Digital Craft and Association of Independent Commercial Producers Next VR award.



SOURCE: [THE MARTIAN: VR EXPERIENCE | 360 VIDEO | GET IT NOW](#)

## Carne Y Arena

Making to the stage of Academy Awards is a dream for all filmmakers. But for some, it is a hobby. **Alejandro** Gonzalez is definitely one of them! **Alejandro** who had earlier won Academy Best Director for Birdman and Revenant added yet another Oscar Glory to his kitty through 'Carne Y Arena', also known as 'Virtually present, Physically invisible' an extraordinary virtual reality installation. The experience brings together a VR landscape with a physical environment sand and pieces of clothing left over by the immigrants who attempted to cross the US-Mexico border. The project places a viewer right in the middle of a group of immigrants as they take on the US Border Patrol, displaying feelings of fear, uncertainty and disorientation. Before the experience ends, users would also get to see a video installation where undocumented immigrants narrate their tales. In Gonzalez's own words, the project enabled users to have a direct experience of the life of the immigrants, as they could walk in their feet, under the skin and even into their hearts. The Academy Board of Governors announced that a Special Oscar Award will be given to the director in honour of a visionary and powerful approach to storytelling. In the entire history of Academy Awards spanning more than 8 decades, only 18 films have won a Special Award. The last one to receive such an accolade was "Toy Story", 22 years ago! According to the Academy President John Bailey, the project has opened new doors for cinematic perception.

# Miyubi

## Carne Y Arena

Felix and Paul - the Montreal based Studio is well known for their cinematic VR storytelling. Their 40 minute film 'Miyubi' is one of the longest VR films ever made and it is a refreshing revisit to the 80s comedy drama written in partnership with the comedy video website 'Funny or Die'. The narrative, told through the perspective of a Japanese toy robot, touches various aspects of family life and emotions. Wondering who is the robot? You, the viewer! You are the gift that a family gives to their little boy on his birthday and through the course of the next year, you get to witness intense family situations in an epic VR tale. Miyubi's interactivity is empowered by filmed sequences and real-time rendering. A beautiful example is the scene that reflects the robot's likeness, including the viewer's head movements. There is also a hidden easter egg, which when unlocked plays a bonus scene to the viewers featuring the famous actor Jeff Goldblum.



SOURCE : [VARIETY](#)



## Dear Angelica

'Dear Angelica' by Oculus is the first animated movie entirely drawn inside VR. The third project from the Oculus Story Studio, 'Dear Angelica' tells the story about the daughter of a famous film actress, who writes a letter to her deceased Mother. The narration of the movie is ignited by that letter and the film takes the viewers around a series of memories that are entwined with the film scenes the Mother character is famous for. Initially, the team planned to draw characters and set individually which could then be used as assets and transformed into VR. But this idea was soon scrapped as the output didn't match the intended quality. The solution that was developed was 'Quill', a tool that allowed artists to draw complicated three dimensional images using a VR headset. What was special about 'Dear Angelica' was that it was animated stroke by stroke, by using individual lines of animation to direct the viewer's attention to the story around them. One of the creatively animated scenes of the film is one where Angelica, when she suffers from an illness, is portrayed as a fight with a monster. The scene is drawn around the user and comes closer and closer giving a claustrophobia kind of an effect. There are also some interactive elements in the movie that is animated only when the viewer focuses his or her attention onto specific areas of a scene. Another cool feature of the film is that, you can pause it, take a walk around and then continue!



SOURCE : [TECHCRUNCH](#)

## Out of Exile

Nonny de la Pena, the founder of Emblematic Group focuses on using digital reality technologies to portray important stories. She is best known for using audio recordings from

scenes of real social conflicts to regenerate them in virtual reality. Her '**Out of Exile**' is a powerful take on the hostility that the LGBT community faces. The film shows an incident where a homosexual young man is confronted by his family members about his sexual orientation. It is based on a real life incident where a homosexual man was verbally and physically abused before he was thrown out of the house. The film is intended to showcase the plight of the LGBT community in America and it also showers light on one alarming stat - Forty percent of homeless youth in America belong to the LGBT community! For 'Out of Exile', Nonny made use of videogrammetry to generate holograms of Daniel, the central character and his family.



SOURCE : [OUT OF EXILE: DANIEL'S STORY](#)

## Mindshow

Mindshow is a unique VR experience that has been developed with thoughtful and innovative interface and scenarios. How would you like to adorn the role of a director for a Pixar like film? That is exactly what the app offers! More like a VR theater, the experience allows users to record every character's words and movements and then later loop them together to tell a logical and continuing story. What's even more special is that you could share these stories with your friends and they can also move on to remix or record their own individual parts. The **Mindshow** experience would make you feel each and every moment as the character that you portray. You will be shortened down to their size and would hear your own altered voice as you speak. One of the controllers in the app allows you to record video, turn into avatars, teleport and rotate or move properties and characters. The other controller provides you with characters, props, a progress bar and play button. So with features like avatar, physical movements, facial expressions and audio, your imagination is the only limit to tell a story!

## Chocolate - VR Music Video

With electro-kittens, champagne and masked dancers, 'Chocolate', the VR music video directed by Tyler Hurd is an absorbing case study on the power of immersive experiences for music videos. Based on a track of the same name by Giraffage, the electronic artist, Chocolate converts a viewer into a three legged robot with unstable fingers. The experience begins by watching your own robo-self in a mirror and after you get used to your shaky fingers, the three legs would start to animate in a peculiar way around the virtual space. Once you fit into your robo self, the song starts and you will be surrounded by a hallucinatory landscape, filled with a gang of masked dancers and rolling neon hills. Wearing big Mayan kind of masks with cat faces, the gang starts to dance around you in unison to the music. The dance is just the beginning of the fun. A little while into the song, you would get a little tingle in your robo hands that would cause you to look down. What awaits you when you look down? Your robo hands will modify into cannon-hands that give out metallic kittens.

Yup, that's right! While the kittens continue to move through the air, along with the beat, everything turns slow motion and with their huge eyes, the kittens turn to you singing out the electronic melody.



SOURCE : VR MUSIC VIDEO 'CHOCOLATE' BY DIRECTOR TYLER HURD IS A SLICE OF PURE PSYCHEDELIC JOY

## Life of Us - Shared VR experience

We have all learned about evolution of life. Now what if you could relive that story in a virtual reality space. That is exactly what **'Life of Us'** have to offer. Created by Aaron Koblin and Chris Milk, this experience takes you through the entire cycle of evolution starting from single celled organisms to post-human robot era. The project can be experienced by 4 participants at a time and you will be taking on the shape of prehistoric fish, dinosaurs, pterodactyl or apes depending upon the stage of evolution you are in! The experience ends with an exuberant robot dance party, giving a fairly optimistic outlook towards our potential future. A cool feature of the experience is that users could talk to each other. Just that the voice will be digitally modified to fit every scene. That means, your voice can vary from a childish squeak of an amoeba to the giant cry of a gorilla!



## IT:FLOAT

Acclaimed author Stephen King's 'IT', was adapted to the silver screen in 2017. Through the IT:FLOAT VR experience, users were able to get a cinematic VR experience by walking through the streets of Derry and getting face to face with the principal antagonist of the film, "Pennywise The Dancing Clown". The VR experience sets the viewer in Georgie Denbrough's point of view and they get to see his dearest paper boat disappearing down the storm drain. And that is where the Dancing Clown shows himself up in the scariest of ways imaginable. Fans could also walk down the sewers where plenty of red balloons await them. But no, that's not the only thing awaiting you down there!



SOURCE : [NERDIST](#)

## Invasion

In the big screen, we have witnessed several stories where the Earth is being attacked by some mighty external forces and our all hopes of survival resting upon certain brave men and women. But how about two little bunnies trying to save the world from the aliens? Welcome to 'Invasion', a short VR experience by Eric Darnell, the famous director of Madagascar. The alien duo is arriving to the Earth with the grand ambition of invading us. But hang on... Two adorable white bunnies, one of them you, are there for our rescue! When gazed down, viewers could get a feel of their funny bunny outfit. This colourful VR animated short also has the voice backup of one of

the prominent Hollywood actors, Ethan Hawke. This cute little short is all set to become a theatrical feature too. In the words of Joe Roth, the former chairman of Walt Disney, "I want Invasion to be the next Toy Story". This VR experience is an Emmy award winner.



SOURCE : [STEAM](#)

## Asteroids

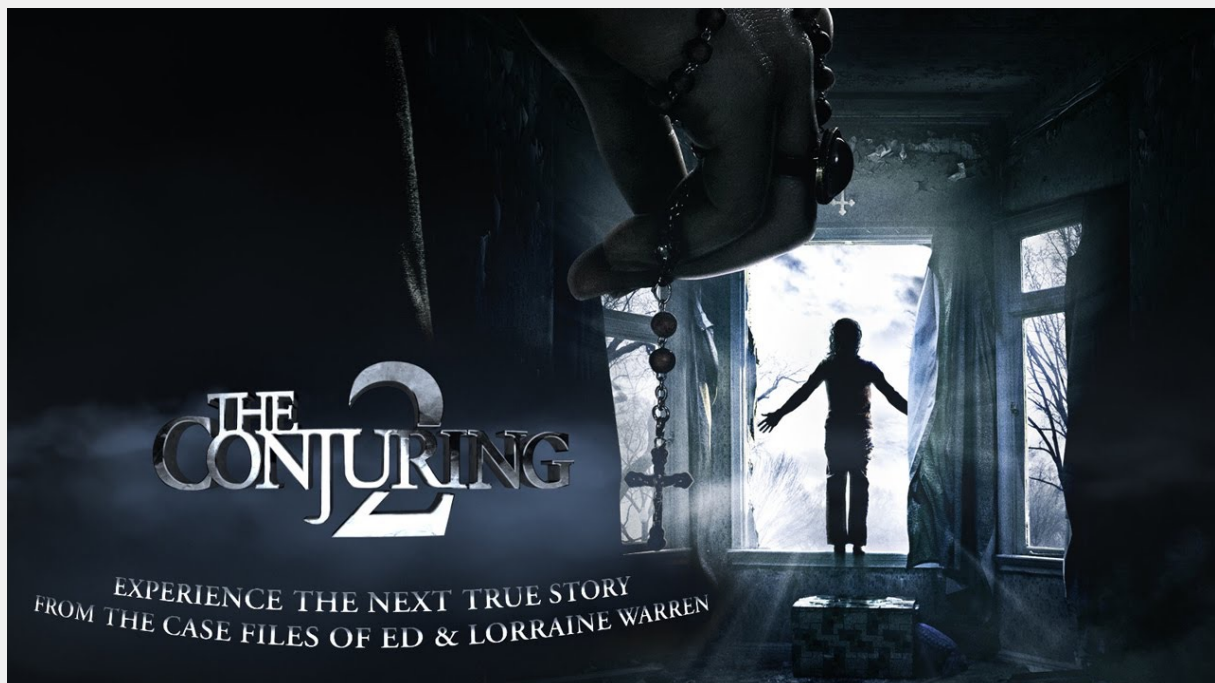
Created by the same team behind 'Invasion', 'Asteroids' follows Mac and Cheese, the same set of lovable aliens of 'Invasion'. In this VR experience, viewers could see the alien duo going about their daily chores on the ship and floating through the space. The studio was able to rop in popular film star Elizabeth Banks and Youtube star Ingrid Nilsen to voice for the main characters in the film. With a running time of 11 minutes, 'Asteroids' features some advanced interactive elements too. Viewers could play around with Peas, the cute little robot dog and also roam around freely on the spaceship. And who knows, when the time arrives, it might be up to you to save the day! Though in the first film, the aliens were portrayed as semi-villainous, in 'Asteroids', they are creatures that evoke empathy. The story begins with the aliens when they are despised by their owners. The characters have been rendered more expressively and empathetically and as a result, they look right into your space when they are angry and they would raise their think tentacle arms and cry when they are sad.



SOURCE : [VARIETY](#)

## Conjuring 2 - Experience Enfield

Valak scared the life out of you in 2016 when *Conjuring 2* premiered in theaters, didn't she? Now how about a virtual reality encounter with her? Titled 'Experience Enfield', the *Conjuring 2* Virtual Reality experience is an immersive trip to one of the haunted domiciles in the film. Make sure to turn the lights off and say yes when the film asks you the spine chilling question, "Do you dare to enter the Hodgson's House?". With electronics turning on and off and crosses flying on wall the demons will quickly let you know that you are an unwelcome guest in the house. Watch out because anyone or anything can sneak on you any moment. The project combined live action and computer graphics into a stereoscopic 360 environment. By making use of scans from the original film set, 'Experience Enfield' team was able to accurately recreate the house including all the size, feel and detailing. An exciting feature of this project is that, you could watch it without vr headsets and still get plenty of scares and thrills.



SOURCE : [SAMSUNG VR](#)



## Ashes to Ashes

Ashes to Ashes is a fantasy tragicomedy set in virtual reality. The experience takes you around the life of a dysfunctional family who are burdened by a strange last wish of their deceased grandfather. Narrated from the perspective of the urn that holds the ashes, the film allows the users to encounter the colorful family members who are living in a reality of their own. That's smart for a virtual reality project, isn't it? A creative brilliance of this project is that, the film, spanning 11 minutes is just a single shot!



SOURCE : [SUBMARINE CHANNEL](#)

## Jack of All Trades

Ever since its launch, 'Jack', the animated butcher has received worldwide fan following and for the Episode '2', the Butcher stepped into the zone of virtual reality. The series is the brainchild of 'Cirkus', a reputed award winning animation production house that has a team of well experienced animation directors. There is a general notion that a professional would eventually get tired of his daily routine works. But Jack, the Butcher has none of that. By using his creativity, Jack has interesting ways to complete his daily tasks and the character is a testimony that even though we cannot change our job at will, we can still make the best of it. In the episode 2, Jack is about to prepare a rabbit, but the courageous rabbit has some other plans for him. Jack's work environments all have a joyous cardboard decorative and this is a take on the child that inhibits all of us.



SOURCE : FIVARS

## The Dream Collector

As human beings we all have dreams that have become abandoned or destroyed. Here is a VR animated short that tries to collect such abandoned dreams! "Dream Collector" tells the story of an old man and his dog who live in a garbage dump. They go about their days filtering through the trash thrown away by others. The objects such as a flattened soccer, torn baseball glove and damaged guitar are remains of people's broken dreams. Determined to bring them back to life, the old man carefully mends them so that he can pass it over to someone who would cherish it. This 11 minute animated vr short was the debut project of Pinta Studios.



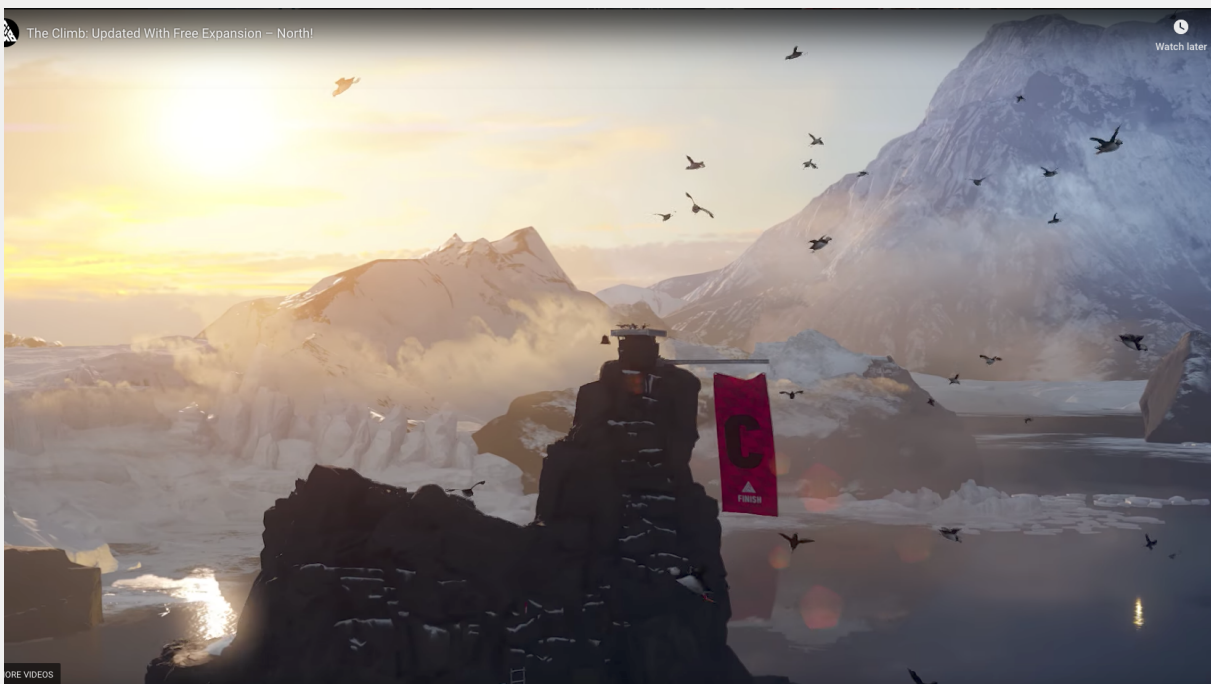
SOURCE : FIVARS



## Climb - VR Game

You might have watched films like Everest and adored the grandness of mountains and heights. Now how about really experiencing it? Try on the VR game 'Climb' to have an unforgettable climbing experience. Mountain ranges across Asia, Europe and North America were used to bring this photorealistic game alive. You don't become a pretty cool climber in just one day and

so the game has different modes to offer. You can start the game in training mode and improve your skills and then later take on a climb in the Tourist mode. Once you have perfected all the skills of a climber, you can elevate yourself to the Bouldering mode.



SOURCE : THE CLIMB



## Werewolves Within - Game

This is a game that brings the classic Mafia game to a virtual reality environment. Considered by many as an indication of future Social VR, 'Werewolves Within', facilitates a cross-platform game experience where five to seven players can virtually gather around a campfire. The goal is to find the killer among the gang. The game gives each player a cartoonish avatar and a confidential role to play. The game does provide players an opportunity to raise their suspicion on some players or use individual roles to listen or catch certain clues but it is mostly piloted by the player's unique ability to talk, like, argue and compel one another. When you talk, your avatar mouth moves and using the unique tone of your voice, the game animates the character's face and body movements. Using the D-pad, users can also call few canned moments like pointing at another character or crossing the arms. Once you complete five minutes, the game forces you to select the character that should be killed as the werewolf. Depending upon that decision and the rules, the game announces the winner. So to win the game, you have to correctly point out the werewolf, survive as werewolf or convince other avatars to finish you when you are the "deviant".



SOURCE : POLYGON

## Minecraft VR

Minecraft, the video game that has sold millions of units ever since its launch in 2009 stepped into the virtual reality arena allowing users to build, explore and battle mobs in a virtual environment. Watch out when you take on the dark caves as the 3D audio can significantly augment your nerves. What are the features that made this game likeable in the normal version? Building shelter? Gathering Food? Developing whatever you want in the creative mode? Or leaping casually into other servers? Whatever it may be, the excitement is just doubled up in VR! A spectacular advantage of the VR experience is that, the game's whimsical, pixelated and blocky art style suits the VR environment perfectly well. With the controller directional pad, a user can easily zoom out of the first person narrative and get back to the theater mode anytime.



SOURCE : MOTHERBOARD

## Ghostbusters: Dimensions Game

Prior to the release of the Ghostbusters movie in 2016, "Dimension", a virtual reality experience was launched at the Madame Tussauds Wax Museum in New York. The experience provides a multi-layered and sensory environment to seamlessly immerse a viewer in the fantasy spiritual world. Players can wear a fVR setup and hunt down ghosts on their own. With two partners, players can enter into a detailed stage where the real world is drawn into the virtual one. The game uses a combination of real-time interactive effects, physical set and virtual reality to help the ghostbuster in you to blast your way through the haunted apartment complex. Users can talk to the fellow ghostbusters, sit in chairs, feel the walls or even sense the touch of a spirit. That is a cool way to send some chills down the spine!



SOURCE : [GHOSTBUSTERS: DIMENSION HYPER-REALITY GAMEPLAY TRAILER - THE VOID](#)



## Rules of Survival

Fans of the multiplayer royale game 'PlayerUnknown's Battlegrounds'? Then, you definitely got to try the VR game 'Rules of Survival' as it brings all the excitement of PUBG into a virtual environment. In 'Rules of Survival', you are one of the 120 unarmed players who gets released in a huge, isolated island. Who would survive? The last one! So that sounds like all the thrill of Hunger Games too, doesn't it? With increasing gas poison and shooting enemies, surviving in this enormous island is not going to be a piece of cake. Players have the option to fight alone or form a team of upto 4 players. And just like in PUBG, you can swag buildings, parachute in, collect weapons and unleash your wisdom to stay till the very end. Another feature of the game is that it allows a user to drive vehicles over various terrains. The game saw its first release in China and it immediately became a domestic sensation. It soon topped the chart of game app ranking which invited attention from all the battle royale fans.



SOURCE : RULES OF SURVIVAL



Storytellers have always looked for creative ways to narrate their tales. During every era, creative brains have made use of the best existing technology to bring their dreams alive. Even if you observe films that were made early in the 20th century, one could see the creative uses of special effects as per the technology that was available. A classic example in this regard is George Melies' 'A Trip to the Moon' that dates back to 1902. It is true that the modern digital era has taken the visual effects to a brand new splendour. We cannot imagine an entertainment world without a Jurassic Park, Matrix, Avatar, Terminator or Titanic! Special or visual effects have always been part of creative narratives such as films, games and television shows. It will continue to be when Virtual Reality starts to take hold of the entertainment world!



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