

# GAMES OR GAMING?

HOW SOCIAL GAMES WILL BECOME GAMES

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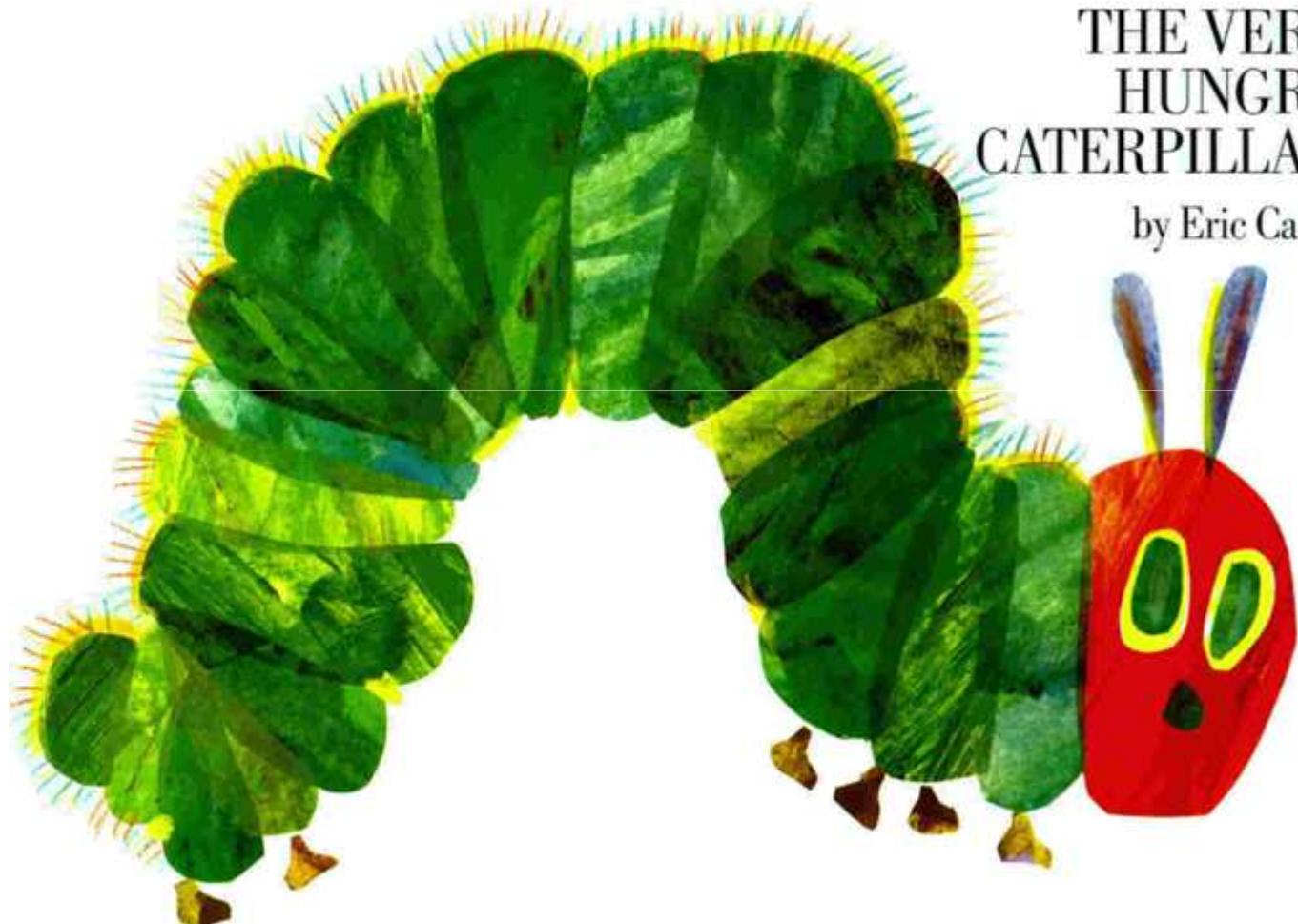
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## INTRODUCTION

- 20,000,000 PEOPLE WILL PLAY CITYVILLE **TODAY**
  - 100,000,000 WILL PLAY THIS **MONTH**
- WHAT WILL THOSE PEOPLE BE PLAYING **5 YEARS** FROM NOW?
  - AND HOW WILL THEY BE **PAYING** FOR IT?
- THIS TALK IS ABOUT WHAT THE SOCIAL GAMES OF **TODAY** MEAN FOR **TOMORROW**
  - IF, INDEED, THEY MEAN **ANYTHING** AT ALL...
- SO, LET'S **START** BY EXAMINING WHAT WE **UNDERSTAND** BY THE TERM "SOCIAL GAME"

ACTUALLY...

- THIS IS A VERY HUNGRY CATERPILLAR



THE VERY  
HUNGRY  
CATERPILLAR  
by Eric Carle

## SOCIAL GAMES

- THE **BIG** REVELATION ABOUT SOCIAL GAMES IS THAT THEY'RE **NOT ACTUALLY SOCIAL**
- WELL, **STRICTLY SPEAKING** THEY **ARE**, BUT PEOPLE DON'T **USE** THE TERM STRICTLY
  - "GAMES PLAYED ON **SOCIAL NETWORK SITES**" RATHER THAN "GAMES THAT RELY ON A SOCIAL **COMPONENT** FOR THEIR GAMEPLAY"
- THESE GAMES ARE CHARACTERISED MORE BY **PLATFORM** THAN **SOCIALITY** OR **SOCIABILITY**
  - THEY **DO** FORM A DISTINCT **GENRE**, THOUGH

## THE GENRE

- SOCIAL GAMES ARE BASICALLY **SOLO** GAMES WITH A **VENEER** OF INTERPERSONAL CONTACT
  - NOT ENOUGH THAT YOU COULD SAY YOU **SOCIALISE** THROUGH THEM, THOUGH
- THE SOCIAL ASPECT ADDS **VALIDITY**
- FOR DEVELOPERS, IT ADDS **VIRALITY**
  - LESS THAN WHEN THEY COULD **SPAM** US, THOUGH
  - TODAY'S **TOP** SOCIAL GAMES GET THEIR PLAYERS FROM **ADVERTISING** FIRST, WORD-OF-MOUTH **SECOND**

## EMPHASIS

- SOCIAL GAMES **ENGAGE** THEIR PLAYERS THROUGH **EXTRINSIC** REWARDS
  - BADGES, ACHIEVEMENTS, RANKINGS AND SO ON
  - BASICALLY, GIVING THEM PATS ON THE BACK
- PLAYERS' **INTRINSIC** REWARDS COME FROM **VALUING** THESE EXTRINSIC REWARDS
- THEY DO HAVE **OTHER** INTRINSIC REWARDS
  - LIKE REGULAR GAMES OFTEN HAVE **EXTRINSIC** REWARDS
- BUT SOCIAL GAMES **RELY** ON EXTRINSIC REWARDS SO AS TO BE **COMPELLING**

ASIDE

- THE **SUCCESS** OF THIS APPROACH HAS SPUN OFF THE ENTIRE **GAMIFICATION** INDUSTRY
- IN THE HANDS OF **DESIGNERS**, THIS HAS **GREAT POTENTIAL!**
  - FOR MAKING **MONEY**, IF NOT FOR ARTISTIC **SELF-EXPRESSION**...
- HOWEVER, IT'S **NOT** IN THE HANDS OF DESIGNERS
- IT'S IN THE HANDS OF **MARKETERS**, WHO JUST **POINTSIFY** EVERYTHING

ADDITIONALLY

- THERE IS AN ARGUMENT THAT SOCIAL GAMES ARE NOT ONLY NOT **SOCIAL**, THEY'RE NOT **GAMES** EITHER
- THIS CRITICISM COMES MAINLY FROM **GAME DESIGNERS** WHO REGARD SOCIAL GAMES WITH **UNIVERSAL HORROR**
- THEY HAVE A **POINT** TOO
  - CAN YOU **WIN** A SOCIAL GAME? CAN YOU **LOSE** ONE? SO HOW CAN THEY COUNT AS **GAMES**?
- CRITICALLY, SOCIAL GAMES LACK **GAMEPLAY**

## POP PSYCHOLOGY

- SO ... WHY DO PEOPLE **PLAY** THEM?
- IN A WORD: **REWARDS**
  - IN FACT, A **STREAM** OF REWARDS
- SUCH A STREAM CAN MAKE FOR A VARIABLE RATE **REINFORCEMENT SCHEDULE**
  - MORE LIKE **GAMBLING** THAN GAMES
- **POSSIBILITIES** HERE FOR MAKING PEOPLE **PSYCHOLOGICALLY ADDICTED**
  - GREAT FOR **SELLING** THEM STUFF!
  - **NOT** SO GREAT IF YOU HAVE **MORALS**
    - OR **DON'T**, BUT WANT TO STAY OUT OF **PRISON**

## GAMBLING/GAMING

- I DON'T **ACCEPT** THIS ARGUMENT, THOUGH
- THE APPEAL IS **LIKE** THAT OF **GAMBLING**
- IT'S NOT **QUITE** THE SAME, THOUGH, BECAUSE THERE'S NO ASSOCIATED **ADRENALINE RUSH**
  - MMORPGS **DO** HAVE THESE, BUT ONLY INFREQUENTLY
- SOCIAL GAMES **CAN** SUCCESSFULLY USE A VARIABLE RATE REINFORCEMENT SCHEDULE TO **LUCK** PEOPLE INTO A **FLOW** STATE
  - BUT THIS IS MITIGATED BY SHORTER **PLAY** SESSIONS, SO **AGAIN** NOT LIKE GAMBLING

RECOGNISE HER?

- ANYONE KNOW WHO **THIS** IS?

- OF COURSE! IT'S  
**CORÍN TELLADO**
- I CHOSE TO USE HER  
PICTURE **BEFORE** SHE  
DIED – HONEST!



## PROBLEM

- HUMAN BEINGS ARE ACTUALLY PRETTY **SMART**
- THEY'RE EXCELLENT **PATTERN-MATCHERS** AND **DATA-PROCESSORS**
- IF THEY **REPEAT** THINGS OVER AND OVER, THEY WILL **NOTICE** AND EITHER BECOME **BORED** BY IT OR GET A DEEP SENSE OF **ENNUI**
  - **INTERNALISING** IT, SO THEY CAN DO IT WITHOUT HAVING TO **THINK** ABOUT IT
- THIS APPLIES TO **GAMES** JUST LIKE IT DOES **EVERYTHING ELSE**

## WORSE

- IT APPLIES **MORE** TO SOCIAL GAMES BECAUSE THEIR REWARDS ARE **EXTRINSIC**
  - THEY ONLY HAVE **VALUE** FOR AS LONG AS PLAYERS **AGREE** THAT THEY HAVE VALUE
  - WHEN THEY REALISE THAT THEY **DON'T**, OH DEAR...
- **BAD:** “THIS GAME IS BORING; I KEEP DOING THE SAME THINGS AND THE ONLY RESULT IS THAT I MAKE MORE WORK FOR MYSELF”
- **WORSE:** “THIS NEW GAME IS JUST LIKE THAT OLD GAME I THOUGHT WAS BORING”

## DECISION

- HERE'S HOW IT WORKS:
  - PLAYER GETS **BORED** WITH OLD GAME AND LEAVES
  - PLAYER IS INTRODUCED TO NEW, **EVOLVED** GAME
  - PLAYER RECOGNISES THAT NEW GAME SHARES AN IMPORTANT **FEATURE** THAT OLD GAME HAD
  - PLAYER **RECOGNISES** THAT THIS FEATURE IS WHY THEY **LEFT** OLD GAME
  - PLAYER LEAVES **NEW** GAME
    - PLAYER **MAY** GO BACK TO AN **OLDER** GAME WITH THE **SAME** FEATURE, BUT THAT THEY HAVE A HIGHER INTRINSIC **REGARD** FOR

## CROSS-LEVEL

- THIS PATTERN-MATCHING CAN HAPPEN AT **ANY** LEVEL
- **MECHANICS:** "THIS TWILIGHT EDITION OF TOP TRUMPS IS JUST LIKE THE BUFFY ONE EXCEPT IT SETS BACK FEMINISM TWO DECADES"
- **GAMEPLAY:** "HEY, THIS COMBAT MECHANISM IS BASICALLY JUST TOP TRUMPS"
- **SYSTEM:** "THIS NEW GENRE-BASED MOBILE PHONE BATTLE SYSTEM IS LIKE TOP TRUMPS ALL OVER AGAIN"

ULTIMATELY

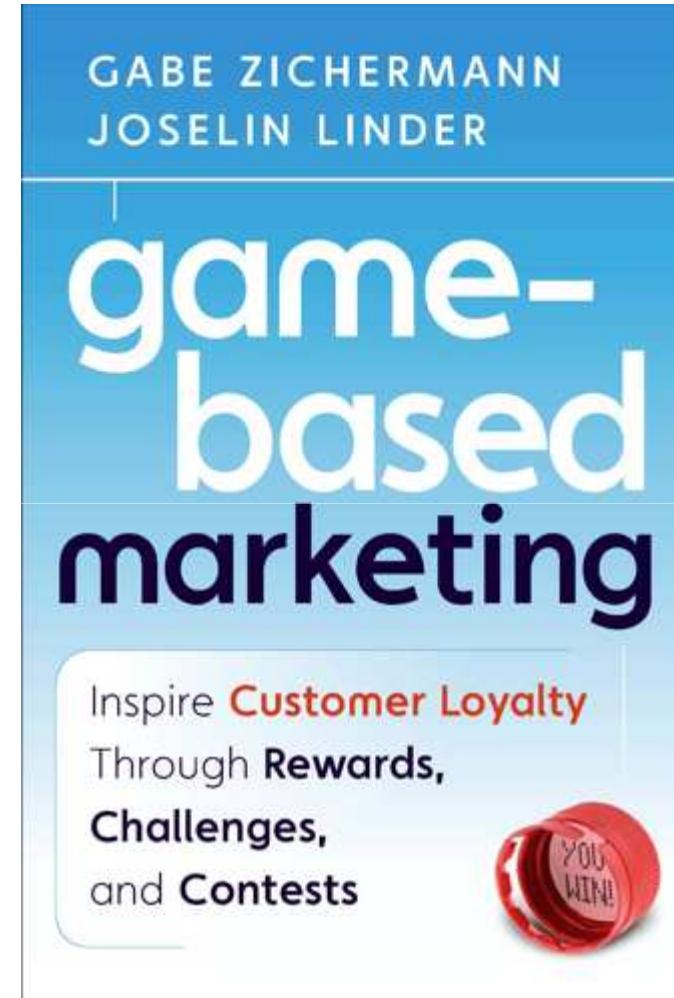
- IF PEOPLE PLAY A GAME **ENOUGH** THEN A **NEW** GAME WITH THE SAME **MECHANICS** OR **GAMEPLAY** OR **SYSTEM** WILL ELICIT ONE OF **TWO** RESPONSES:
  - "I CAN SEE WHERE THIS IS HEADING AND I **DON'T WANT** TO GO THERE"
  - "I CAN SEE WHERE THIS IS HEADING AND I **WANT** TO GO THERE"
- FOR TODAY'S **SOCIAL GAMES**, IT WILL BE THE **FORMER** RATHER THAN THE **LATTER**

## LEMMA

- FROM **THIS**, WE CAN DEDUCE THAT WHATEVER TODAY'S CITYVILLE PLAYERS PLAY **FIVE YEARS** FROM NOW, FOR MOST OF THEM IT WILL BE **NOT CITYVILLE**
  - NOR ANYTHING **LIKE CITYVILLE**
  - IF YOU'RE DEVELOPING A \*VILLE-STYLE GAME OF THE FUTURE, **GOOD LUCK** WITH THAT...
- SO WHAT **WILL** THEY BE PLAYING?
  - HMM, I'M NOT SURE THIS ATTEMPT AT **DRAMATIC TENSION** IS WORKING...

MEMES

- INFURIATINGLY, I DIDN'T GET A **BADGE** FOR BUYING THIS BOOK



## GROK

- **GROK** (v): TO UNDERSTAND INTUITIVELY
- THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN **EXTRINSIC** REWARDS AND **INTRINSIC** REWARDS IS A PATTERN THAT PLAYERS **CAN** AND **WILL** GROK
  - EXTRINSIC REWARDS: YOU SPEND **WEEKS** ACQUIRING THINGS **PRESENTED** AS BEING IMPORTANT THAT **AREN'T**, IN FACT, IMPORTANT
- THEY **AGONISE** OVER LETTING THEIR STUFF **ROT** BY LEAVING, BUT **WILL** EVENTUALLY LEAVE
  - THEN **HATE** EXTRINSIC REWARDS EVEN **MORE**

TO WHERE?

- ACTUALLY SOME PEOPLE **DO** LIKE THIS, AND WILL **HAPPILY** PLAY **MORE** OF THE **SAME**
- **MOST**, HOWEVER, **WON'T** AND WILL LOOK FOR SOMETHING **BETTER**
- WHAT DOES “**BETTER**” **MEAN**, THOUGH?
- WELL, THAT DEPENDS ON THE **INDIVIDUAL**
  - I'D CITE BARTLE'S **PLAYER TYPES** MODEL, BUT HE MIGHT GET UPSET AT TAKING IT OUT OF CONTEXT
    - THE WARRANTY IS **ONLY GOOD** FOR VIRTUAL WORLDS
    - USE AT YOUR **OWN RISK**, GAMIFIERS!

## BETTER EXISTENCE

- THE POINT IS, THOUGH, THAT FOR ALL PLAYERS THERE **IS** A “BETTER”
- THEY **KNOW** THERE IS BECAUSE THEY’VE PLAYED **ENOUGH** TO SENSE GAMES’ **POTENTIAL**
  - THE “I CAN SEE WHERE THIS IS HEADING AND I **WANT** TO GO THERE” BRANCH
- WHICH BRINGS US TO THE **VERY HUNGRY CATERPILLAR**
  - **30,000,000** SALES AND **MANY** TIMES THAT NUMBER OF READERS

## VERY HUNGRY

- PEOPLE WHO **BEGAN** READING WITH THE VERY HUNGRY CATERPILLAR DON'T WANT TO READ **MORE** VERY HUNGRY CATERPILLAR
- THEY WANT TO READ MORE **BOOKS**
- LIKEWISE, TODAY'S PLAYERS OF SOCIAL GAMES WILL **NOT** WANT TO PLAY **MORE** SOCIAL GAMES
- THEY'LL WANT TO PLAY MORE **GAMES**
- SOCIAL GAMES ARE MAKING **NON-GAMERS** BECOME **GAME-LITERATE**

## NEXT STEPS

- THERE WILL INEVITABLY BE A MOVE AWAY FROM EXTRINSIC REWARDS TO INTRINSIC REWARDS
  - INTRINSIC IS WHERE ALL THE **FUN** IS
- **BUT** *different* PEOPLE FIND *different* THINGS FUN
- EXAMPLE: SOME PEOPLE FIND **INTERACTION** WITH OTHER PLAYERS FUN
  - THEY'RE ILL-SERVED BY "SOCIAL" GAMES THAT TREAT OTHER PEOPLE AS **RESOURCES** TO BE **MINED**
- THESE PEOPLE WANT **MULTI-PLAYER** GAMES

MORE

- EXAMPLE: SOME PEOPLE FIND THE **PROBLEM-SOLVING** ASPECT OF GAMES FUN
  - THEY WOULD HAPPILY DOWNLOAD A GAME AND PLAY IT ALONE **OFFLINE**
  - THEY ONLY NEED THE CHECK-IN **VALIDATION** THAT A SOCIAL ASPECT OFFERS
- THESE PEOPLE WANT MULTI-PLAYER **GAMES**
- CENTRAL POINT: SOCIAL GAMES ARE BEGINNING THE **EDUCATION** OF NON-GAMERS, WHO WILL INEVITABLY COME TO WANT **ACTUAL GAMES**

## SIDE-EFFECT

- AN UNDERSTANDING OF **GAMES** INVARIABLY LEADS TO AN UNDERSTANDING OF **FAIR PLAY**
- **SOME** PLAYERS ARE **FINE** WITH GAMES IN WHICH **LOSERS** CAN PAY MONEY TO BECOME **WINNERS**
- THE HARDER-CORE THE PLAYERS, THOUGH, THE MORE **UNSUSTAINABLE** THIS BECOMES
  - COSMETIC ITEMS ARE **ACCEPTABLE**; ONES THAT IMPACT ON FAIRNESS ARE **UNACCEPTABLE**
- SO IS IT **BYE-BYE FREEMIUM GAMES**, THEN?

## CAUTION

- BEFORE YOU GET ALL **EXCITED** THAT 100,000,000 PEOPLE WILL WANT TO PLAY YOUR **AAA FPS** IN 2016, IT'S **NOT LIKE** THAT
- WE SAW FROM **CASUAL** GAMES THAT THE MARKET **FRAGMENTS**
- PEOPLE HAVE DIFFERENT **LIKES** AND **NEEDS**
- EVEN IF THEY'RE **READY** TO RISE TO THE "NEXT LEVEL", OTHER FACTORS CAN **INTERFERE**
  - TIME, EXPENSE, SUBJECT MATTER, INTERFACE, ...
  - MAYBE \*GASP\* THEY PREFER **TV** TO GAMES!

## ANALOGY

- JUST BECAUSE PEOPLE **START** WITH THE VERY HUNGRY CATERPILLAR, THEY DON'T ALL HAVE TO **END** AT THE SAME PLACE
- **SOME** END WITH TOLSTOY'S WAR & PEACE OR SHAKESPEARE'S SONNETS OR GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ'S SHORT STORIES
- **MOST** ARE GOING TO BE HAPPY WITH DAN BROWN OR CORÍN TELLADO OR JEFFREY ARCHER
- A SMALL FEW WILL TURN TO WRITING THEIR **OWN** FICTION (GAMES, IN OUR CASE)

## THE QUESTION

- SO WHAT **WILL** TODAY'S CITYVILLE PLAYERS BE PLAYING IN 5 YEARS' TIME?
- WELL, SOME WILL INDEED **STILL** BE PLAYING CITYVILLE
  - UNLESS ZYNGA SHUTS IT DOWN
- AS WITH MMOS, A SMALL RUMP WILL **NEVER** WILLINGLY LEAVE A GAME IN WHICH THEY HAVE **INVESTED** SIGNIFICANT TIME
  - THEY IMBUE **EXTRINSIC** REWARDS WITH TOO MUCH **INTRINSIC** VALUE

NEXT

- **SOME** PLAYERS WILL BE ENJOYING THE LATEST IN THE \*VILLE SERIES
  - THEY STILL FIND THE RECEIPT OF EXTRINSIC REWARDS INTRINSICALLY REWARDING **EVEN THOUGH** THEY KNOW THEY'RE **ULTIMATELY** WORTHLESS
- **MOST** WILL BE PLAYING **CASUAL-LEVEL** GAMES FROM A **VARIETY** OF SUB-GENRES
  - **FUN** BUT WITH LOTS OF DIFFERENT EMPHASES
  - THEY **WILL** ALL HAVE STRONG GAMEPLAY, THOUGH
  - \*VILLE GAMES COULD **EVOLVE** INTO THESE

FINALLY

- SOME **MORE** PLAYERS WILL GRADUATE TO GAMES THAT **GAMERS** PLAY
  - THEY MAY EVEN **SELF-IDENTIFY** AS GAMERS
- A **FEW** WILL MOVE ON TO PLAYING SOPHISTICATED, THINKING-PERSON GAMES
  - ALTHOUGH TO BE HONEST, THEY WERE PROBABLY **DESTINED** TO DO THIS ANYWAY
- A **TINY** PERCENTAGE WILL TRY TO DESIGN NEW GAME FORMS TO **FILL** THEIR **VOID**
  - I **DID** SAY PEOPLE WERE ACTUALLY QUITE **SMART**

## THE ANSWER

- SO THE **ANSWER** TO THE QUESTION “WHAT WILL PLAYERS OF **SOCIAL GAMES** BE PLAYING 5 YEARS FROM NOW?” CAN FINALLY BE **DIVINED**
- IT’S “MUCH THE SAME AS WHAT **NON-SOCIAL GAME** PLAYERS ARE PLAYING RIGHT NOW”
- ONLY THERE’LL BE **100,000,000** MORE OF THEM...