

# Battle for the Nether - Excerpt

Book Two in the Gameknight999 Series: An Unofficial  
Minecrafters' Adventure

By Mark Cheverton

*He sped down some kind of track, a set of metal rails stretching out into the darkness. The rhythmic clatter of the wheels beat at a constant pace—chu-chunk, chu-chunk, chu-chunk—that echoed throughout the tunnel, reflecting back like a percussive symphony. Looking about, he could see short grey sides and a boxy interior to the vehicle in which he rode, the appearance and the clatter of the wheels telling him that he was in a minecart. The cramped space made him feel like a giant in the small iron cart, but the blur of the cold stone walls speeding past made give him a feeling of being small and insignificant.*

*Gameknight999 was scared.*

*Uncertainty and fear filled his mind. He didn't know where he was, what he was doing in the minecart, or even where he was going. All he knew was that he was heading somewhere—fast.*

*Just then, the tunnel wall opened, and he could see a huge cavern—no, it was a giant crevasse that opened up to the blue sky. He could see zombies, spiders, and creepers on the sheer walls, leaping from one position to the next, the clumsiest of them falling to their deaths. Looking down, Gameknight saw the floor of the crevasse filled with monsters from the Overworld, all milling about as if looking for something to devour...or someone. Many of them looked up at him, and their ravenous, burning eyes chilled his soul. They wanted to destroy him for no reason other than that he was alive. Shuddering, Gameknight was glad when the crevasse passed by, the tunnel wall once again filled with solid stone.*

*Looking back along the track, Gameknight could see the metal runners disappearing into the distance, the wooden cross*

*braces a blur of brown streaks. But then he noticed that the cart was decelerating, the clickity-clack of the wheels slowing their drumming until the minecart gradually came to a halt in the middle of a tunnel.*

*Feeling that he was expected to get out, Gameknight stepped out of the cart, his body shivering with fear. Looking around, he could still see the minecart tracks stretching out to infinity, the iron rails standing out against the gray stone. But then they started to fade, becoming fuzzy and out of focus somehow, the straight rails losing their definition until they dissolved into nothing. At the same time, the rocky walls that hugged close to the tracks seemed to fade as well, turning from hard granite to a swirling silver mist. The cold, wet fog enveloped him, its clammy presence wrapping around him like a heavy, damp cloth. Something about the blurring cloud of obscurity frightened him, like it was hiding something dangerous and threatening.*

*And then the mournful wails started.*

*It was a sorrowful moaning that seemed to suck all hope from him, a moaning that sounded doomed and sad at the same time, but also hateful and angry at those living things that still possessed any faith in a good life. It was aimed at the creatures of light who still clung to the thought that being alive was a good thing, and not just a lesson in torment and despair; it was aimed at him.*

*The wailing was from a zombie...lots of them. Gameknight started to shake, the morose wails stabbing at him with icicles of fear.*

*And then green claws reached out to him from the darkness, the terrible moaning filling the air as razor-sharp nails sliced just inches from him. Overwhelmed with panic, Gameknight999 stood frozen in place as the decaying zombie approached, slowly materializing through the fog, the smell of its decomposing flesh assaulting his senses and adding to his fright. Looking down, he realized that he had an iron sword in his hands, his arms and chest also covered with iron. He was wearing armor and had a weapon; he could fight back. Struggling to draw a*

*morsel of courage, Gameknight willed his arm to swing the sword and strike down the beast, but fear ruled his mind. Memories of clawed zombie hands and fanged spiders striking out at him filled his mind—the pain of that moment when he'd detonated the TNT on the last server still haunting his dreams. That last Minecraft world had been saved because of his selfless, heroic act—probably his first ever. But the cost had been his spirit and courage, and that had left his mind in a constant state of panic. Monsters terrified him, the great Gameknight999; how was that possible?*

*Stepping away from the zombie, he turned to run. He knew this was only a dream, but the terror and panic still felt real. As he turned, he found himself facing a tangle of furry black legs, each tipped with a dark, curved, wicked-looking claw: giant spiders, at least half a dozen of them. They were pressed together, forming an impenetrable wall of hatred and spite.*

*“I can't fight that many,” Gameknight said to nobody.*

*He shuddered.*

*Just then, a rattling noise trickled through the darkness, the sound of loosely fitted bones clattering together. He knew exactly what those sounds meant—skeletons. The pale white figures slowly emerged out of the swirling fog, closing off any avenue of escape to the right. Each of the boney monsters held a bow at the ready, arrow already notched and drawn, the barbed projectiles pointing directly at him.*

*Gameknight started to shake.*

*How was he going to fight all of these monsters? He wasn't brave anymore, his courage having been blown apart by all that TNT—no, torn to shreds by all those claws and fangs on the last server. He was just a hollow shell, a husk filled with dread.*

*Turning to his left, he slowly shuffled away from the three groups, hoping to escape without having to fight, but as he moved, a high-pitched chuckle filled the air. It was a maniacal kind of sound, like laughter focused on another's misery, like glee being felt while another creature suffered. It was a terrible sound that echoed throughout his soul, causing needles of panic to pierce the last vestiges of control he had over his own mind. And then the*

*source of the chuckling came forward out of the darkness. It was a shadowy creature, the color of dried blood, a dark, dark red, with long, lanky arms hanging down, nearly reaching the ground, and skinny legs supporting an equally dark torso.*

*It was Erebus, the King of the Endermen from the last Minecraft server—the server that Gameknight had saved. This beast was his personal nightmare, the most violent and evil creature that he could imagine.*

*Turning, he faced the monster. As always, its eyes were burning bright white with a hatred for all living things. Its desire to destroy emanated from the creature like its own personal force field of malice. Gameknight took a step back. The creature was partially transparent, as if not completely there. The monsters behind the enderman were visible through its translucent body.*

*“So, User-that-is-not-a-user, I see that we meet again,” Erebus cackled in a high, screechy voice.*

*Chills ran down Gameknight’s arms.*

*“This is just a dream; it’s not real,” he said to himself over and over.*

*Erebus laughed a spine-tingling laugh, making him become momentarily solid, then faded back to partial transparency.*

*“It is indeed a dream,” Erebus screeched, his voice reminding Gameknight of the sound of glass grinding against glass; it made his teeth hurt. “But that does not mean this is not real, fool. You still know nothing about Minecraft and the server planes on which it exists.” He laughed again. “Your ignorance will cause your downfall.”*

*“No, you aren’t real,” Gameknight said, pleaded. “You can’t be. I...killed you on the last server...You can’t be real.”*

*“You keep telling yourself that, User-that-is-not-a-user, and when I find you on this next server, I’ll remind you of how unreal I am...when I destroy you.”*

*Erebus cackled again, the laughter resonating within his mind like a hammer to a crystal vase, his will to live nearly shattered.*

*“I...w-will...fi-fight you, like on the last server,” Gameknight stammered, his words unconvincing.*

*“Ha...what a laugh,” Erebus screeched in his high-pitched, piercing voice. “I can see the cowardice within you like a malignant tumor. All of your bravery was apparently left behind on the last server. You are an empty husk, a hollow casket waiting for a cold body. You will be mine soon enough.”*

*The enderman stepped forward menacingly, the transparency of its body not diminishing its threat in the least. Gameknight looked down quickly, not wanting to provoke the creature with a direct gaze. The dark monster towered over him, seeming to get taller and taller as he approached, until Gameknight felt like a tiny gnat standing before a giant.*

*“I can see defeat in you, User-that-is-not-a-user. I have already won; your cowardice guarantees the outcome of our battle.” Erebus paused, then tilted his head down so that his glowing, malice-filled eyes were glaring straight down at Gameknight999. “You may have defeated me on the last server, but I still made it to this server plane. And when I destroy this world, I’ll reach the Source, and that too will feel my wrath until all living things cry out for mercy that will never come. Await my arrival and despair.”*

*With a flick of his wrist, Erebus signaled the monsters around him to advance. Decaying green-clawed hands reached out toward him, tearing at his flesh, while a hundred arrows pierced his body. Poisonous spider fangs then darted into the fray until his body was consumed with pain. Slowly, the world dissolved into darkness, with the eyes of the enderman being the last thing visible, their expression filled with overwhelming, unbridled hate.*

*Then, finally, the cold, black emptiness of his subconscious embraced him as the dream faded. But the feeling of pain and dread still filled Gameknight’s soul.*

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