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Addicted to a fantasy world: Mother obsessed with computer game let her children live in squalor and left her dogs to starve to death:

By Jaya Narain

- **Judge bans her from using computers**
- **Children 'drink' cold baked beans for dinner**

A mother neglected her three children and let her dogs starve to death because she was so obsessed with a computer game.

The 33-year-old woman played the Small World game almost non-stop on the internet for months while her children were reduced to eating cold baked beans straight from the tin with their fingers.

Her home became filthy, with rubbish strewn over the floor and the bodies of her two dogs, a German shepherd and a lurcher, left for two months in the dining room it was revealed.

A mother who neglected her three children and let her two dogs starve to death after becoming obsessed with a computer game has been given a suspended jail sentence and banned from using computers

The woman, who cannot be named for legal reasons, has been given a suspended jail sentence and banned from using the internet by a judge in Kent.

The horror only came to an end when a neighbour peered through the letterbox and alerted the authorities, Maidstone Crown Court heard.

The woman's children, aged nine, ten and 13, were badly neglected for six months, said Deepak Kapur, prosecuting.

When officers arrived at the house in Swanley, Kent, in February the woman told them it was 'in a bit of a mess' They then saw rubbish all over the floors in all of the rooms.

The woman tried to block officers from entering the dining room and when asked why she replied: 'All right, my dogs are in there. They are dead. I killed them. I probably starved them, probably because I have been playing the computer game all the time.'

Her lawyer said: 'She retreated into a completely different environment. She obviously became addicted to Small World'

She received an invitation from a friend on Facebook to play Small World and had very quickly become hooked.

The game featuring characters such as wizards, dwarves, orcs and giants is played like a traditional board game but online.

DWARVES AND ORCS AT WAR

Small World is an online board game featuring characters such as wizards, dwarves, orcs and giants.

It can be played independently or through the social networking site Facebook and has a legion of fans who compare it to the popular Dungeons and Dragons board game.

According to the makers, Days of Wonder, players 'vie for conquest and control of a world that is simply too small to accommodate them all'.

Players must use their troops to occupy territory and conquer adjacent lands in order to push the other races off the face of the earth.

Unlike virtual worlds – where players assume an avatar and interact directly with each other – Small World is played like a traditional board game where you spread out your 'army' to take over nearby territories with the aim of taking over the whole board.

It can be played with friends online, or alone.

'She started playing initially for an hour a day in late 2009 but since August of that year it had become an obsession to the point where she was only getting two hours' sleep a night,' said the prosecutor.

'She still managed to feed the children and get them to school but accepted she let everything else go.

'Afterwards, it became so overwhelming she didn't know where to start.

'It got to the stage where she only bought food that didn't need cooking.

'Allan Compton, defending, said the woman had been a devoted and competent mother until tragedy struck some years ago with the death of her husband from a heart attack.

'She retreated into this virtual world provided by her laptop computer,' he said.

'She shut herself off from the outside world.' Mr Compton said the house was now habitable.

The children had been taken into care, but she hoped to be reunited with them in the future, he said.

The mother was sentenced to six months' imprisonment suspended for two years, and ordered to do 75 hours' unpaid work.

She was banned from keeping animals. She had admitted three charges of child cruelty and two of animal neglect. Judge

Jeremy Carey told her: 'Your life went very badly wrong.

Your children were badly neglected indeed. There was decay and filth all around.' Judge Carey banned the woman from access to the internet 'to assist you to resist the temptation to return to this virtual world'.