

Virtual Encopresis – Paul Blake

Jared entered the warehouse on a shopping trolley. Blasters in both hands firing neon pink plasma bolts at the players waiting in ambush. He spun and whirled as one by one they fell. The trolley continued its way across the concrete floor, slowing down to a trundle until it hit a pillar. Jared stepped off and ran back to the bodies collecting their loot, weapons, and ammo. Five players turned spectators.

Messages from the fallen popped up on his heads-up display inside his display helmet: “Lucky shot asshole.”, “Hey Jared, add me as a friend.”, “Don’t take my gold pistol. Please.” Jared swiped his hand to the right, and they closed. He looked at the ‘players remaining’ counter. Two left. He knew who the other one would be. And also, where they would be.

“Hermes,” he spoke. Calling the system’s messenger app. “Message XxUnknown212xX. Message reads: I’m coming for you lol.”

“Message sent,” the app said in its flat and formal tones.

Within a second, a reply came back. No words. Just a video clip of a baby sticking up its middle finger. Jared laughed. He closed his hands into fists and banged them together. This told the system to replenish his ammo levels.

Jared knew that Unknown would be at the other end of ‘sniper’s corridor’. They had played this map countless times before, and Unknown had always favoured this location. Sniper’s corridor was on an upper level of the warehouse. If Jared attacked head-on, there was a 40/60 chance he’d win. It would depend on where Unknown was waiting and which side of the corridor Jared hugged. Jared wasn’t happy with those odds.

There were two well-known ways up to that level: the staircase and the freight lift. Both approaches took you directly into the killing zone. Jared, however, had spent the past couple of weeks searching for a third way and he thought he had found one. In a normal game, you wouldn’t get a chance to try it as it was in the spawn point for the opposing team that would be suicide to enter, let alone hang around in. Knowing where Unknown would be, and having all the other players in the game eliminated meant that Jared would be able to get a shot at it.

Jared ran out of the warehouse. He followed the building round to the rear. At the back was an entrance to the warehouse. This was where the opposing team would enter and set themselves up. He knew that Unknown would have booby-trapped the entrance. It was standard practice. Jared did the same. The opposition spawn point, where they'd re-enter the game if they hadn't lost their three lives, was facing the rear entrance of the warehouse. To the side of the spawn point was a water tower. At the top of the tower, there was a slight ledge that faced an open window on the upper level of the warehouse. Beginner players usually stayed at the top of the tower hoping to catch anyone foolish enough to attempt to storm the rear of the warehouse. Jared had searched forums and watched online videos, but as far as he knew no-one had attempted to leap from the tower to the window. From the ground, the distance and angle looked impossible, but by watching videos posted by beginners that are avoided by seasoned players sick of seeing players unable to shoot even the warehouse, let alone the opposition, Jared saw that the gap could just about be crossed. He checked his system to make sure he was live-streaming his game. He hoped that this stream would explode online and elevate Jared to one of the top players of the game. That exposure would bring sponsorship contracts and free merch allowing him to quit his boring office job and game full-time.

As Jared approached the tower, Unknown messaged him. He opened the message. A video of a man turning into a skeleton popped up. Jared called up the Hermes app and sent back the message 'You'll die soon enough, enjoy your last moments polishing your weapon.'

Jared climbed the tower. At one stage a protruding pole caught on his trouser leg stopping his progress. He jerked his leg a few times to work it loose, each time swearing at the shoddy game mechanics that caused this and how this would look on his live-stream. He dropped to the floor. The snagged pole ripped through his trouser leg, exposing his character's metal cyborg skin. Jared cursed and restarted his climb. He watched out for the damned pole on his second climb and made it to the top without further incident.

At the ledge, Jared looked across to the warehouse window. He couldn't see any traps laid there. There were always noticeable tell-tales to warn players: practically transparent downwards-pointing arrows for mines, or an extended halo effect warning of sentry guns. This was done by the game makers so players couldn't complain about unfair game deaths. At the speed players usually moved around the map, these tell-tales were normally seen too late. Better hope this works, Jared thought. He holstered his pistols and stepped back away from the ledge as far as he could go. Took a deep breath. And started moving. He pumped his legs hard and pushed off from the edge.

His jump carried him close to the warehouse, and he reached out his arms and grabbed the window frame. He let out a whoop of success and clambered his way in through the window. He took out his pistols and entered the warehouse.

He slowly made his way to where he thought Unknown would be waiting. He'd never been in this part of the warehouse. From the other side of the map, the sniper's corridor ended in what was commonly thought to be a dead end. Jared hoped that the map designers had hidden a path to there. He placed each step carefully to avoid making noise. He must be near, he thought. He followed a series of corridors that looked like they had been placed by someone playing that ancient Snake game in that video he'd seen of the history of the mobile communicator. Along the meandering corridor, there were a few rooms with closed doors. When he tried the handles, they were all locked. Messages from Unknown kept popping up on Jared's HUD. He swiped them away unread.

Jared turned the corner and in front of him was a blank wall. He stopped and stared. He could imagine the comments being posted on his live-stream. He always turned them off when he was playing and skimmed over them later. Fuck, he thought. He didn't want to head back the way he'd came. Admit defeat and risk losing the match. He walked up to the wall looking at it closely. He ran his hands across the surface, looking for a hidden switch or a pressure pad or anything to let him through. Nothing. Frustrated, Jared smacked the wall to his right.

He felt the area he'd hit move. He looked, and a square recessed hole appeared. In the centre of the recess was a red button. He pressed it. As you would. A quiet whirr of motors started up. Jared readied his weapons. The end wall dropped through the floor and Jared could see sniper's corridor. To his left, looking away from him was Unknown. Crouched in a firing position, eye pressed to the scope of his pulse rifle. Jared pulled up his messaging app and motioned typing the words 'Game Over' across the virtual keyboard in front of him. He pressed send and snuck up behind Unknown. Jared lifted his pistols and held them near Unknown's head. He waited. In his earpiece, he could hear the ding of the message being received. Unknown's face came away from the scope, and as he turned Jared fired both pistols point-blank at his opponent.

Unknown slumped to the ground, his head a mess. The game performed a fanfare and replayed the killing shot in slow motion for Jared and the spectating players to see. The game faded out and returned to the lobby area.

Jared opened his voice communicator app and clicked on XxUnknown212xX's name. Almost instantly, he could hear the shocking voice of his friend and prey.

“Where the hell did you come from?” Unknown asked.

“You’ll see soon enough. It should be all over the chat boards in a few minutes. You up for a rematch?”

“Aw man, it’s two a.m., I’m beat. We’ve been playing for hours. I’d been waiting so long I’d thought you’d fallen asleep in your rig again. Haven’t you got work in the morning?”

“Yeah, start at nine. It’s ok, though. I’ll catch some sleep in the bathroom stall for an hour or so around lunchtime. You sure you don’t want to get revenge?”

“Maybe once I’ve seen how you got around me. I’m off to bed. Night.”

“G’night.”

Unknown closed the connection. Maybe I should get some sleep, Jared thought. I don’t want to fall asleep on the train to work again. That man got seriously annoyed at me drooling on his suit last time. Jared laughed at the memory. He called up the system menu and was about to press ‘Exit’ when a notification popped up saying DirtyPhreek had come online.

DirtyPhreek was in the top five, maybe top three, of players in the whole game. Jared ranked in the tens of thousands. Jared had watched hundreds of his videos. Trying to glean any information that would improve his own game. At last year’s GameCon Jared had queued for over two hours to get his signature. The signed poster was framed and in prime position in Jared’s room. Jared had set alerts to let him know when any of the top players entered the public server. This happened very rarely. They usually stuck to their own private servers to avoid being hounded by hundreds of messages from players trying to catch their attention. Jared watched, finger still poised over the ‘exit’ button, to see what lobby DirtyPhreek would enter. He was sure there would be a huge stampede from the other players to join him, Jared wanted to make sure he was first.

Jared didn’t notice the flashing message at first. His was focused on what DirtyPhreek would be doing. It gradually attracted his attention. When he saw the user’s name that sent it, his heart skipped, jumped, and stopped all at the same time. The message was from DirtyPhreek. With a shaking hand, he opened the message and read. His mouth dropped open.

‘Hey Jared, I saw your last game. That was some sweet move. Fancy some 1v1?’ the message read. Jared blinked and reread the message. This can’t be real, he thought. DirtyPhreek wants to play against me? What do I write back? Play it cool.

‘Hey DirtyPhreek, sure sounds good. You can choose the map.’ Jared sent. That’s good, he thought. Like I get regular invites from the top players. A game invite flashed up on the screen and Jared immediately clicked on it.

They played seven games together. The games were hard-fought. Of course, DirtyPhreek came out on top, but Jared didn’t care. He’d played against one of the best players in the game. Not only played, but he’d also come close to winning a few of the games.

After the final game, DirtyPhreek messaged Jared: ‘Thanks for the games, you’re pretty good. You nearly had me on some of the games. We’ll have to do it again sometime.’

‘Yeah that’d be great,’ Jared messaged back.

‘See ya,’

With that last message, Jared’s system indicated that he’d received a new friend request. It was from DirtyPhreek. Jared punched the air. Unknown will never believe this, he thought. No one will. Elated Jared accepted the friend request and exited the system.

The first thing Jared noticed back in the real world was the daylight streaming through the windows of his room. Fuck, what time is it? The second thing he noticed was an overwhelming stench. What the hell? He looked down and saw the floor of his room covered in excrement and urine. He gagged at the sight and smell. What the fuck has happened? He looked around for the cause, barely daring to move. He saw a dangling tube hanging from his leg, still dripping piss onto the now brown carpeted floor. What? The tube connected from the waste section of his gaming suit to a disposal unit that linked to his room’s sewerage system. The tablets he took before each gaming session to keep him alert and awake had the side effect of turning any solid waste into liquid form. The suit took that all away and kept him clean, so his gaming wasn’t interrupted by the call of nature. Jared thought of the pole on the tower that had snagged him, his movements must have dislodged the tube. Oh shit.

END

Author's note.

I hope you enjoyed this story. Twenty-seven other short stories can be found in my short story collection *A Few Hours After This* on Amazon - [A Few Hours After This - Amazon Link](#).

