There’s Always A Hidden Cost

Drake couldn't believe it, yet another two people on his usual players list dropped out, saying that they had switched games and that they likely weren't going to change back anytime soon. That made almost half the list of his regulars that had fallen off the radar in order to play the latest first-person shooter that had just been released a few weeks ago. The strangest thing was that it was a free to play game, which normally was either something that was just used to test a concept or were filled with microtransactions in order to try and milk the casual gamer out of their money. But not only was its player base rapidly growing but it had also gotten rave reviews from even the most hardcore of game reviewers.

When the lobby for his game failed to fill with enough people Drake sighed and logged off for the night. His frown deepened when he was about to close off his gaming app and saw an advertisement for the same game that had taken so many of his friends away from their usual games. He just couldn't understand it, if someone had made such an addictive game why the heck didn't they charge for it? What was their hidden angle?

As he continued to sit there and contemplate he saw someone pop into his voice chat, his sour mood lifting when he saw that it was one of his oldest gaming friends. He hadn't seen him in a few weeks and was glad to finally have a familiar person in the game chat once again. "Hey there buddy," Drake said with a grin. "You busy tonight? Everyone else is bailing on me and now I can't even get a lobby filled, but now that you're here I bet we could get a decent co-op going."

"Actually..." The voice on the other end said.

"Oh no, not you too Faust!" Drake said with a groan. "Are you really playing that game too?"

"Since it came out man!" the voice on the other side said.

Drake sighed and rubbed his forehead as he clicked on the gamer tag and saw that his friend had logged in hundreds of hours in the game. He also had blown out his microphone or something, because even though he could still hear him there was a hissing noise that was prevalent whenever he talked. "I thought that we both swore off free-to-play games," Drake said in confrontation. "You can only get so far and then you have to pay money or they throttle your progress!"

"Not for this game!" his friend quickly replied. "Trust me dude, you have to get in on this before these people wake up and decide to charge people."

They talked for a few more minutes before his friend said that he had to get back to the game and hung up. A few seconds later before Drake hopped off for the night he saw that his friend had posted him a link to the game as part of a referral bonus, along with the instructions to pick Renzyl but not pick the naga since was the general he was a part of. The young man just rolled his eyes and shut everything down, then went to bed for the night.

The next morning Drake decided to head to the local game store in order to see if he could dig up anything else on this new shooter that everyone was talking about. There had to be some sort of gimmick, he reasoned, something that people aren’t mentioning when it came to the game itself. When he got there he found that the area normally reserved for playing console and computer games was not only shut off but completely blacked out. It was something that never happened before, even when there were tournaments the store owner would keep it open to allow people to watch. When he went up to it to see if he could get in he heard someone say that it was closed for a private event, turning to see a group of guys and a girl his age hanging out at one of the tables.

“Is it that free to play shooter game that everyone seems to be playing?” Drake asked, which caused them to nod. “You’re kidding me, they’re having tourney play of it now? And why is it closed to the public?”

“Part of the intrigue of the game,” the one sitting stiffly at the bench said. “They don’t want people just watching, you have to participate to be a part of it. Gotta join a team like everyone else.”

Drake sighed as it was clear these four were also part of the game’s fanbase. “I just don’t believe it,” he said as he shook his head. “Even one of my friends told me to join in and he hates these types of games. Said I should join team Renzyl or something like that.”

“You should join team Renzyl,” the one that sat on the table said with a grin. “It is the superior team after all.”

“No way man!” another guy said once he had finished pounding back an energy drink. “You have to go with Lord Famjin, muscle sharks all the way!”

“Maybe if you like just splashing around in the water,” the one that sat on the bench replied coldly. “If you want the technological and aerial superiority you go with Haleon, air over sea any day. It’s why I keep beating you on our three on three matches.”

The girl in the group of four snickered and looked down at her friend. “You only beat him because he sucks and can’t tell when you’re about to unleash your metal feather storm,” she said before looking at Drake. “I’ve beaten all of them more times than I can count, which is why if you want to go with superior firepower you choose Santer.”

That sparked a whole new wave of back and forth between the group of friends and Drake listened to it for a while before he decided to leave the game store and head back home. This new video game seemed to have taken the entire gaming community by storm, he thought as he walked back into his bedroom. When he turned his computer back on he saw that the first thing to pop up was the link his friend had sent him. At this point his curiosity finally got the better of him and he clicked on it, then waited for the requisite files to download before he could get started.

Once it was finished the game filled his screen, the title credit Nexus Wars appearing for a few seconds before it faded into the backstory of the game. Drake was rather surprised at how much they seem to have put into it, telling of ten creatures that are vying for control of the universe and how they recruit their armies in order to try and one up one another. Just from the intro alone he could tell their programmers had put some serious time into the graphics, which made why this was a free-to-play game all the more confusing. Finally the intro ended and what he assumed the character select screen came up, except as he read the instructions he found that he was actually choosing the faction he would be fighting for.

When he looked at the possible factions he could be a part of they each seemed to have their own faction leaders, the ones that his friend and the people at the game store were talking about. They were somewhat unusual in their appearance, like the bull that looked like he was wearing a zentai suit to the horse named Santer the one girl was talking about who looked like a stuffed animal from a leather fetishists dream. Others were slightly more normal in a video games setting, there was some sort of canine that formed itself out of smoke and a naga creature that was made out of liquid. Finally he came to the one named Renzyl that his friend had told him to play as, the dragon appeared to have rubber skin and much like the others looked slightly demonic in nature. When he tried to find stats or other rewards joining the faction would give him he found the only descriptors to be rubber and reptiles, whatever that meant.

With no real ability to see what the choices do Drake decided to choose Renzyl, the rubber dragon winking at him before the screen shifted once more. This time it appeared that he had to choose a General, which from the look of it there were four that he could choose from. While of them were rubber in nature one of them was classified as a wyvern named Zander, which Drake assumed was the flying option, another was a naga called Berza, which was what his friend chose, and the last two were lizardmen. Since he wasn’t a huge fan of flying mechanics and he didn’t want to take the naga that left the two lizardmen, one named Sivilath that was covered in markings while the other was named Shadow and was completely made of black latex.

“Ugh… stealth mechanics,” Drake said as he chose Sivilath, this time the avatar flourishing a paint brush in the air before the scene switched to a loading screen. At first he wondered if he was going to be able to customize a character or something like that, but when he regained control he found himself in a first person view in the middle of a huge virtual cityscape complete with different arenas that were accessible by portal. Apparently he was in the central safe space, what appeared to be your typical hub where people could socialize and get upgrades at shops. It all looked fairly typical, if not quite lavish, but as he began to walk around there was something he noticed that caused him great confusion and more than a little concern.

There were no ads, nothing popping up at him, and no mention of a currency that you could pay for with real money. There was an in-game currency, special coins that you can use to try out and buy various upgrades, but there appeared to be nothing that would make the programmers any money. There wasn’t a box to be seen, and yet the number of people in the world and the number of different ways you could play suggested to Drake that the server space required for this game would be insane. If that was the case then how on Earth did the developers do all of this?

“Drake!” a voice said behind Drake, which once more caused the gamer some surprise that it had an in-game voice support system as he turned around to see a huge latex naga behind him. “It’s good to see you buddy! I was wondering when you were finally going to give in and join the dark side so to speak.”

“Damn Faust is that you?” Drake asked as he looked up and down the muscular creature that smiled at him. “How long did it take for you to get an avatar like that?”

“Worth every minute of playtime,” Faust said with a grin. “Also I’m really glad that you picked Sivilath, the faction has been pretty heavy on the Shadow side when it came to lizardmen and we could use the support your general gives. Now let me get a private room here so we can get you geared up and ready to fight the other factions. If we hurry we can get in a King of the Hill match with Haleon’s metal bird squad, but first we have to get you used to everything this game has to offer.”

While Drake wasn’t sure what that meant he followed the slithering snake over to one section of the hub marked for private rooms. Faust punched in a password or something into the keypad and the yellow barrier disengaged, allowing them access inside. Once they were through to the other room Drake looked around, not sure at what he was looking at. He had expected some sort of locker room or military war room, what he got instead was a very large bedroom. It definitely was not the military feel he had been expecting, though he didn’t have too long to ponder as Faust motioned for him to head over to the bed.

“So I managed to snag you a piece of beginner’s armor and a tail slot,” Faust said as he handed Drake the two items, both of them under the description of the body modification slot. “Unfortunately that’s all the credits that I had left, I didn’t have much in the way of gear for the followers of Sivilath. Oh yeah, and I have a gun for you too, which I’m hoping we can score a knockout so you can see what you can do in action, but first get geared up while I explain the mechanics.”

Faust went on to describe that the main bar to be concerned about was the conversion bar, which if it became full while playing another faction that you would join that faction. As he went on to describe how as being mostly human meant less protection from such things he put on the body armor that covered his chest before looking at the tail that he held. Faust could see that Drake was having a bit of trouble and told him which command key was the equip tail slot. When he did that he saw the tail disappear behind him and then the prompt came up for him to accept all modifications.

As soon as he clicked yes Drake felt an electric tingle shoot up his arms and down his entire body, which caused him to jump back and cry out. At first he thought he had been electrocuted as he pressed his hands against his chest, but as he did he felt something there that definitely shouldn’t have been. He quickly pulled off his headphones and shirt and found that the normally pale skin had not only darkened considerably but the muscle underneath it began to grow firmer. His breath caught in his throat as his brain locked in panic, unable to do anything but watch as the pads of fat that he had gained from his gamer lifestyle melted away and was replaced with a very uncharacteristic set of washboard abs.

Just when he thought it couldn’t get any weirder as he felt his pectorals begin to fill out there was a sudden pressure at the base of his spine and the waist of his pants felt tight against him. Since he had already gotten half naked Drake decided to go the rest of the way and pulled down his pants and underwear as well. The second the fabric hit the floor he began to feel his spine stretch, gripping onto his chair as he felt something begin to wiggle just above his rear. While the sensations were intense they were not painful, in fact it seemed to be accompanied by an almost euphoric rush as his tail grew out until the tip of it pressed against the floor.

When his transformation was finished he looked down at himself in both confusion and awe. His skinny human arms and hands brushed up against the now black, shiny, scale-textured skin that was his shredded chest and abs. The latex seemed to end right above his groin, which as he realized with some embarrassment was completely erect as his legs remained completely human from the waist down. Just then he saw his new rubber tail come into his vision, which as it slid along the floor he pressed his foot against just to see if he could feel it. The response was immediate, feeling the pressure of his foot he also shuddered from the tactile sensation of latex against his human flesh. It still took him a minute for his brain to catch up with what was happening, everything he saw on his body right now was in complete defiance of every natural law that he knew in his existence.

Once he finally had his fill of touching his new body parts he heard his friend’s voice in his headset, looking at the screen he saw that the naga seemed to be staring straight at him with a smug look on his face. “I guess I should have told you about that part,” Faust said once Drake got back on-line. “Of course I wanted it to be a surprise like when it happened to me. How do you feel there Drake?”

“I feel…” Drake hesitated slightly as he brought his hand down across his chest, feeling his tail swish around in the hole that mercifully had already been in his chair from the design. “Powerful… like this body was meant to be mine. But how? What just happened to me?”

“No one knows why,” Faust replied. “All anyone knows is that when anyone starts the game and gets their first body mod it’s like a drug, no one can truly stop even when they finish upgrading themselves completely into a form like mine, there’s always new transformations to get. Of course part of it is from what I’m about to show you next, just try to stay at your computer this time.”

Drake was unsure of what was about to happen next, especially as without his input his avatar changed position from standing to a sitting position on the bed. When he saw Faust’s naga avatar begin to lower down the male’s eyes widened at what he was about to see, his view shifting to see the serpentine muzzle already on his crotch. Just as he was about to ask what he was doing there was a loud bang as his knees hit his desk when he felt something press against his arousal in real life. It was so realistic he had to look down to see that there was nothing actually between his legs. Despite his groin being unoccupied in real life it still felt like something slick and rubbery was pressed against it, like his friend’s avatar muzzle that was in the middle of licking and nuzzling his shaft.

As he tried to ask how this was happening Faust just shushed him and grinned as he began to suck on his virtual cock. The feeling immediately seemed to translate to Drake’s real member and he had to hold onto the lip of his desk just to keep from squirming too much. It was the most intense blowjob of his entire life and he wasn’t even physically getting one, but for the time being it was real enough to him to not interrupt. Just as he was really starting to get into it however the snake stopped and pulled off, which caused Drake to nearly fall into his chair as the serpent grinned and shifted his avatar around once again.

“That was just to get you used to the sensations,” Faust hissed as Drake began to have the feeling of rubber scales pressed against his back and rear. “There was a reason that I wanted you to get a tail modification, so that I could raise it while you let me take you in appreciation for giving you your first mods.

Drake couldn’t believe what he was hearing or what he was feeling, especially from his normally rather straight-laced friend that he could have sworn was straight from earlier conversations he had had with him. Part of his brain tried to reason that this wasn’t true, that this was some sort of hypnotic or subliminal message that the developers somehow put into the game to make these sensations happen. All that reasoning was quickly pushed out of the way by a sudden rush of pleasure as he felt the phantom cock begin to spread open his ring of muscle down there. Even though he was no expert in the subject he knew that there should have been a bit of pain that accompanied that, his only explanation to why it didn’t was that the latex appendage that sliced through the air before wrapping around essentially nothing was that like his chest the rubber had affected his tailhole too so he could easily accept such an insertion.

“Oh gods yes…” Faust hissed as Drake gripped his desk, only to him it felt like the sheets he was pinned on as his eyes remained glued to his screen. “I knew I had to get you into this game, this is something I’ve been wanting to do for so long. Master Renzyl will be so pleased with his newest convert.”

Newest convert? Master Renzyl? The words continued to ring in Drake’s ears as he tried to disengage, only to feel a real weight on his back pinning him down as the rubber naga that had been his friend continued to push his way inside him. Drake let out a series of short gasps as that tapered latex length slid deeper inside of him, spreading open his walls even though there was nothing physically there. None of that mattered to him anymore though, it was real enough for Drake that every time he clenched down on the thick tool he felt it throb against him or that he was pushed forward slightly as the naga began to thrust inside him.

In the very back of his mind not clouded by pleasure Drake could only imagine the scene if someone had walked in on him, sweat on his face as he stared at a screen while naked and hunched over his chair as he made the motions of someone having sex with him. That didn’t include the disproportionate rubber chest and tail on his otherwise human form as the naga hissed in his ear how good of a player he was and how well he’d do in Renzyl’s faction. Drake was practically drooling as after a few minutes his desk shook after Faust gave him a few hard, powerful slams into his rear before finally cumming. When it was over and Drake felt the phantom appendage slide out of him he sat back in his chair, completely exhausted.

“Well then,” Drake heard as he panted heavily, turning his avatar to see Faust’s rubber cock sink back into its slit while a grin appeared on his muzzle. “Still have a few minutes before that fight, shall we join in?”

About ten minutes later Drake and Faust were on one of the trams that led to their destination, what Drake would have called the lobby screen if he hadn’t just been cybersexed over the internet by the serpentine partner that now rode next to him. Now that the fires of lust had been satiated and he was once more clear-headed he could finally analyze the game fully. Part of him said he should have disconnected and gotten out while he still could, but that still wouldn’t explain how he saw virtual body modifications on his real body. As he looked around he saw that many of those on the train were like his friend, fully upgraded from their human forms with a number of additional accessories. A few were like him with only a few body parts and one was completely human, which when Drake looked up at Faust he just shook his head.

The tram led them to a cityscape and when it stopped the objective flashed on the screen, which was to gain control of the city. It appeared they only had a set time limit before the round was over and the fight for control of this particular biome was fluctuating between several factions. As soon as they hopped off Drake suddenly had a pistol in his hands, which would have been his default weapons except that Faust quickly traded it out for an assault rifle. When he looked over the naga he saw that his weapon was an LMG, the heavy weapon held in both hands as they made their way to the objective.

Almost immediately the two watched as the human player darted out front, which caused Faust to shake his head. “Poor sap,” he said. “Didn’t talk to anyone in the lobby, that’s a quick way to get yourself converted. Now we’re going to be a man down and they’re going to be one up on us, unless they got a newb of their own we can take in compensation.”

Drake was unsure of what the naga meant and Faust just told him to watch. As expected the human avatar was quickly gunned down by opposing forces, the health bar going down to zero as the conversion bar went up. At that point he expected the human to disappear and reappear at the spawn point, instead what happened was a large robotic hawk man dropped from the sky and picked him up. Several from their team tried to take shots at them but the other player deployed some sort of shield, and as Drake watched the metal bird pressed his hands against the human’s head before closing his wings around him. Though most of his body was covered Drake could see the legs and feet of the male shake as they dangled there before they were covered in liquid metal, the human’s conversion bar racing to full before the feathered robot opened his wings once more and now there were two metal birdmen standing there.

“Idiot…” Faust said before motioning for Drake to move on. The rest of the game played out like a standard shooter, save for the strange conversion mechanic that everyone seemed to avoid. At one point he had been cut off guard and shot down at close range by a hawk that landed next to him, and with his health bar empty all he could do was lay there as the metallic creature leaned down and placed his hands against his head.

Almost immediately Drake felt a surge of energy pulse through his body as his mind was bombarded with mental commands from the male corrupting him, telling him to join Haleon as Drake felt the liquid metal begin to spread throughout his body. As his conversion bar continued to rise Drake’s eyes rolled back into his head while his mind continued to get assaulted with images of synthetic creatures having all sorts of wonderful sex with one another, wings flapping as they pushed into each other’s beaks with-“

The sensations suddenly stopped as a barrage of bullets peppered his converter, the hawk trying to escape before his health reached zero and he fell to the ground. “Sorry bout that,” Faust said as he blew the smoke from the barrel of his gun. “Almost lost you for a second there.”

Drake was helped up by the naga as he watched his conversion bar slowly lower back down to nothing, and as he looked at his arms in real life he found that the metal feathers on them had been real until they seemed to evaporate into pixelated nothingness. “Will hurry up then,” Faust said, snapping him back to the game. “We got a chance to even the odds.”

“Wait, what?” Drake asked. “What do you mean?”

“Those under Sivilath are our primary corrupters,” Faust explained. “I’ll provide overwatch, you corrupt him. Then we can even this battle up for sure. Just lean down and let instinct take over, trust me.”

The competitor in Drake knew that this was his chance to rack up some credits, not only with his team but for himself as well. He leaned down over the avatar and began to reach for his head like it had done to him when another option appeared to paint the downed enemy. He took that one and as he placed his hands on the metal skin of the other creature he could feel something thick ooze out of his palms and over the creature’s body. He suddenly could see the hawk man’s conversion meter as it filled up while he found himself spreading more of the liquid rubber over the hawk’s body. This time he could see mental images, but they were ones that he was giving his prey of hot, steamy sex between the rubber muscles of male reptiles. In the background he could hear Faust’s gun go off as he shot at those that were trying to interrupt him, but by then he had completely replaced the metal bird with a latex lizardman that gasped as his mind was ingrained with the will to serve his new master, Renzyl.

“Congrats!” Faust said as Drake unlocked an achievement of his first conversion, getting a bunch of credits and a positive reinforcement of pleasure that flooded him. “Conversion on your first day, you’re a natural! Now grab your gun, we got a hill to claim!”

Just as he was about to get up a prompt appeared on his display that said the person he just converted was nearby, and if he would like to physically finish his conversion face to face. As he looked down at the rubber male that now followed him with pure adoration in his eyes a smirk began to crawl across Drake’s face. To the victor goes the spoils, he thought to himself with a chuckle.

A few hours later night had fallen as Drake’s car entered the parking lot of the game store once again. To everyone else he was just like before, a normal guy who was about to participate in a gaming tourney he now had access too. To the four that continued to sit and relax on the table they saw a proud latex lizardman, runic symbols decorating his tail as he strode towards the back. Drake nodded to the snyth parrot, leather horse, neoprene shark, and fellow latex shadow lizard males before he went inside. In the back room he could hear the moans and grunts of those that had won and lost, one of them being his target to convert as his rubber cock tented in his pants.

After this, he thought as the door closed behind him, he was going to have to make liberal use of his friend referrals…