THE UNWANTED

by WALTER WYKES

CHARACTERS

DAN

LIZ

EMMA

SETTING

An apartment

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THE UNWANTED

[DAN, LIZ, and EMMA lounge on a couch. DAN and EMMA

High five. They nurse half-empty glasses of mountain dew.]

EMMA

I can’t do this.

LIZ

Told you.

EMMA

It doesn’t …

DAN

What?

EMMA

It doesn’t feel right.

DAN

What do you mean?

LIZ

She’s gonna back out.

EMMA

It’s just …

LIZ

Did I call it or what?

EMMA

There’s something … I don’t know … unnatural about the whole thing.

DAN

Unnatural?

LIZ

Pfff!

EMMA

It just feels weird.

DAN

I don’t understand.

EMMA

Maybe I should go.

LIZ

Maybe she should. Freaking tease.

EMMA

I’m sorry.

DAN

Wait—

LIZ

There it goes! Dan’s fantasy—up in smoke!

DAN

Emma—

LIZ

Poof!

DAN

I thought we were really clicking.

EMMA

We were. We are.

LIZ

Talk about mixed signals.

DAN

So what’s the rush?

EMMA

I … I don’t know. I just—

DAN

You didn’t have a good time?

LIZ

Oh my god!

EMMA

No—

LIZ

Are you really gonna guilt her into staying? That’s so pathetic!

EMMA

—I had a great time.

DAN

Me too.

LIZ

I’m gonna be honest—I’ve had better dates. I mean, it was pretty mediocre.

EMMA

You’re great.

LIZ

Nothing special. No fireworks.

EMMA

You’re a great guy. Really. You’re smart. You’re funny.

DAN

So …

EMMA

It’s just the …

DAN

The whole …

EMMA

The thing with …

DAN

Yeah.

[Pause.]

LIZ

Awkward silence.

DAN

Is there anything I can do to make you feel more comfortable?

EMMA

I don’t know.

DAN

I don’t want to pressure you.

EMMA

No.

LIZ

Oh, no—of course not. No pressure.

DAN

I mean, if you want to go—

EMMA

It’s not that I want to—

DAN

You want more mountain dew?

LIZ

Yeah. Get her hyper, Dan. That’ll help.

[DAN fills EMMA’S glass.]

EMMA

[To DAN.]

It’s not you.

DAN

I know.

EMMA

It’s her.

LIZ

Right—the two of you have no chemistry and it’s my fault! Unfreakingbelievable!

EMMA

She just sort of hovers over everything.

DAN

I know.

EMMA

She’s like this unspoken …

DAN

Spectre?

EMMA

There’s an 800 pound gorilla in the room, you know?

LIZ

Did she just call me a gorilla?!

DAN

You look great, by the way.

LIZ

She called me a freaking ape!

EMMA

You’re not trying to change the subject—are you?

LIZ

Are you gonna let her get away with that?!

DAN

That hoodie is fantastic.

EMMA

Thanks.

DAN

Really. Fantastic. It looks great. On you. You look great in the hoodie.

EMMA

I picked it out just for tonight.

DAN

Did you?

EMMA

Yeah.

DAN

No way.

EMMA

For you.

DAN

Really?

EMMA

Uh-huh.

[DAN and EMMA pick up controllers.]

LIZ

Oh, give me a freaking break! He could care less about the hoodie! It isn’t the

freaking hoodie he cares about! What he really wants is to get into the game as fast as possible—isn’t that right, Dan? He’s trying to figure out the quickest way to shut you up and get his hands on that juicy double XP weekend! That’s what he’s doing! That’s what he’s been doing all night—waiting for you to shut up … picturing the loot boxes … various legendary weapons … wondering

just what you’ll trade to him after the raid … how far you’ll carry him … if you’ll

have the nerve to tell him no when he starts to get really salty. He’s probably already thinking about his current build. He used to do the same thing with

me. Maybe he still does—although he’d never admit it. Maybe he’s picturing all

three of us right now—right here on this couch—Doritos and mountain dew everywhere—enemies writhing and twisting on the screen.

He’s trying to work out the geometry of it. The mathematical possibilities.

It boggles his mind—the number of ways he could play tonight.

He’s trying to pick just the right one—or the right combination.

You won’t even see it coming. He’s smooth, I’ll give him that much—it’ll sneak up on you. He’ll wait

until you’re comfortable, until you’re really feeling safe, and then—BANG!

Suddenly you’ll find yourself 10 hours deep in a six hour raid clearing every freaking room twice for loot drops!

You have no freaking clue what’s going on here! If you’re smart, you’ll thank him for a nice

evening, turn around, walk out that door, and never look back. If you’re smart.

But you’re not—are you? You’re not smart at all. You’re a stupid freaking noob.

So why don’t you just get out that stupid headset and get over with it!

DAN

It really is a nice hoodie.

EMMA

You said that.

[DAN tries to boot up the game again—but she stops him.]

Can I ask you a question?

DAN

Sure.

EMMA

Are you just using me to get over her?

[Silence. Dan picks up his glass of mountain dew. Smells it. Sits. He

doesn’t look at EMMA—just stares at the floor.]

If you are, just tell me. I’d understand. I mean, it’s understandable. I mean, I

wouldn’t judge you or anything. How could I? After what you’ve been through.

How could anybody? I just need to know what to expect here.

I need to know what we’re doing.

[Pause.]

So … what are we doing?

[Pause.]

Dan?

[Pause. EMMA sits next to him. She touches his hand or his

knee. DAN continues to stare at the floor.]

Talk to me.

[Pause.]

Do you want me to go?

DAN

No. No, I don’t want you to go. I don’t know. I don’t know what we’re doing.

EMMA

Okay.

DAN

I mean, how can I—

EMMA

I’m sorry.

DAN

I can’t even—

EMMA

I shouldn’t have—

DAN

It’s not even real, you know? It’s like it didn’t even happen. I wake up in the

morning—every morning—and I can’t remember if it was just a bad dream, a

really bad dream, or ... and then I look and she’s not there next to me … the

pillow’s empty … maybe she’s just in the bathroom … maybe …

EMMA

I shouldn’t have brought it up.

DAN

No—

EMMA

It’s none of my business.

DAN

She left a note. Did you know that?

EMMA

No.

DAN

She left a note that she was doing it for me.

EMMA

Oh my god.

DAN

For me. Because she knew I didn’t want her anymore.

EMMA

That’s horrible.

DAN

What’s horrible is it was true. I didn’t want her either.

I was ready to walk away from thousands of hours of raids and

she knew it. I was gonna wash my hands of the whole freaking thing—find some

sane girl and start over—someone who didn’t play mind games and video games all the freaking

time—someone who didn’t question my every motive—someone who didn’t scare

the hell out of me. You know, there were times I was actually afraid she might

kill me. My own wife. I was afraid she might poison the milk or stick me with a

steak knife in the middle of the night. Honest to god. I was afraid to go to sleep.

[Pause.]

Sometimes, I think the only reason she didn’t is she knew this would hurt more.

This would stay with me.

[Pause.]

If you want to go—

EMMA

No—

DAN

I know I’m kind of a head-case right now.

EMMA

Who wouldn’t be?

DAN

I just don’t want to think about it. I keep seeing her in that pool of blood … the

way I found her … with her wrists and … it was all over her nightgown … the one

I’d bought her for Christmas … her eyes were all glassy … like you see in the

movies … like a dead fish … like a dead fish, but it’s

my wife, and it’s real, and I can’t get that picture out of my head. I want it to go

away. I want it to go away like a bad dream, but—

EMMA

It will.

DAN

It hasn’t yet.

EMMA

Trust me. It will.

[She kisses him—then takes the mountain dew from his hands and

places it on the table.]

You know what you need? A little distraction.

[EMMA boots up the game.]

DAN

A distraction?

EMMA

Yeah.

DAN

What kind of distraction?

EMMA

The good kind.

[The game begins to start up.]

DAN

What are you—

[She puts a finger to her lips seductively—don’t argue.]

I … I don’t know if it’s really the right—

EMMA

Shhhh.

DAN

Emma—

EMMA

I know you are super close to level 80.

DAN

You don’t have to—

EMMA

I’m a big girl, Dan—I know what I’m doing.

[She gets off the couch]

Want some hot pockets?

[He nods.]

Give me two minutes.

[She exits to the kitchen. Silence.]

LIZ

Looks like you’re gonna get some XP after all.

[Pause.]

You know most of that kindness is fake—right? It’s all an act.

I just don’t want you to be disappointed.

DAN

I don’t suppose I could get you to move towards the light—or in your case the

flickering red flames?

LIZ

Not a chance.

DAN

Didn’t think so.

LIZ

You should be happy. You always said you wanted a three man deathmatch.

DAN

This isn’t exactly what I had in mind.

LIZ

No?

DAN

Not so much.

LIZ

Be grateful for what you’ve got, Dan. Be grateful for what you’ve got.

[She follows EMMA into the kitchen. DAN glares after her. But still goes back to playing the game]

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