

"TRASH" - A VR SCRIPT

By

Brooke Jaffe

CTWR-526

FADE IN:

EXT. TRASH ISLAND. - DAY

[SCRIPT NOTE: Using this Quadrant system-- Q1 is black, Q2 is red, Q3 is Blue, Q4 is Green, Q6 (Above) is Orange, Q7 (Below) is purple. All orientations are listed in direct reference to the quadrants as they are oriented when the player begins- they do not move with the player.]

It's dark. You can hear the low roar of the sea seep into your perception, the caw of gulls. The buzzing of flies. There's shuffling growing louder and louder, like something large is being dragged across bumpy ground.

Your eyes creak open. Ugh, too bright- the world is horrifically, painfully white until you adjust: you start to see shapes, fading out of the light like they're walking towards you through fog. A rusty barrel labeled with a cartoon stegosaurus and a logo for "Happysaur Oil and Power". A pile of fetid fish guts laced with seaweed. An abandoned life preserver from the S.S. Marianne, broken and dirty and half-buried underneath your cheek. It's been here a while. Have you?

It's early afternoon, based on the height of the sun. Light wobbles and bends in the heat rising off the floor of garbage. This would look like a beach, if beaches had sand made of packing peanuts and ground-up plastic to-go cups. Faintly, from far on the horizon, there's a trail of white smoke drifting up to the sky and into hazy clouds.

You stand. If you look down at yourself your clothes are ragged, waterlogged, dried in the sun. There's a cord around your neck with something at the end making a faint pulsing sound, and a small red light flashes in time.

To your left, the dragging stops and you hear the muffled noise of an angry seagull and someone cursing at it to bat it away. A few moments later, a gull with ratty wings flaps down onto an overturned stack of discarded bobbleheads before you and looks at you curiously; it squawks.

The shuffling-dragging sound still grows closer, closer. There's a faint humming with it, like someone whistling while they work. Periodically the dragging sound pauses and there is a small crash or shifting, and then it resumes. From between two hills of junk appears someone so wrapped up in old ratty blankets and deconstructed shirts that it's

hard to get any sense of what gender they could be. Even the voice is hard to pin down. They look at you through Coke-bottle goggles (which may be more literal than the term usually suggests). Behind them is a giant sack made of stitched-together plastic bags mounted on a makeshift cart cobbled together out of old skateboards and bicycle wheels.

STRANGER

Oh? You're new.

THE STRANGER (Old?) approaches you, cart dragging behind them, and drops the handle to look you over. They sound croaky and aged, whoever they are.

STRANGER

Where d'you come from, eh? Not many end up here.

You don't know how to answer.

STRANGER

Fine, fine. Come help me with this, wouldja?

You start to walk over, but before you can take a step the Stranger blocks your way and stops. Their goggles level at the thing around your neck.

STRANGER

Whatcha got there?

They examine the pendant-device hanging from your neck, pulling off their goggles for a moment to squint at it with milky eyes before settling back and replacing their goggles.

STRANGER

Huh, never seen one'a those before. Reckon you don't know what it is, neither?

(beat)

Don't know much 'bout much, do you kid?

Another thing you have no answer for. The Stranger moves aside and gestures to a small empty place on the cart next to the bag, where you can sit. If you look inside the bag,

it's full of any number of things that would end up in the garbage but still could contain some kind of food: ketchup packets, old bags of chips with a few crumbs left inside, not-quite-scraped-clean jars of peanut butter, military-grade survival rations still in their packets but a month or two past the "use-by" date. Looks like what you'd expect.

STRANGER

Well, sit there. I can pull, but I need someone to shoo the damn gulls away from my stash. Just wave your arms at 'em when they land an' they'll go away. You do that for me, I'll take you back to my place where it's safe, I can get you some fresh water, and we can take a better look at that thing you got 'round your neck. Someone in town might be able to tell you what it is.

You sit. Soon after, the cart jerks to life and starts moving. The Stranger talks as you are pulled along.

STRANGER

I been finding some ship parts around, lately. Think you might'a washed up here like that.

A seagull lands on top of the bag and starts pecking at its contents. You wave your arms at it and it squawks defensively, but flaps its wings and leaves all the same. *If you decide not to wave it away, it steals a mostly-empty bag of cheese pops and flies off, causing the Stranger to swear angrily and glare back at you.*

As the cart winds through the terrain, it's all made of junk: *hills of soggy carboard and plastic bottles, valleys of pizza boxes and plywood.* A lot of this trash looks really old. The newer stuff is in a thin layer on the top: bullet casings, stacks of banned books, some bones from who knows what.

STRANGER

You talk at all, kid?

You look at *the Stranger*. *UI prompts you: shake your head, shrug, or put your hand horizontally in front of you and*

wiggle the sides up and down in a "so-so" gesture while holding the controller.

STRANGER

Heh, got it, got it. Well you're not the noisiest company I got, that honor goes to the people in town and to these fuckers— (they gesture to the seagulls)— but considerin' how they TAKE MY STUFF (they yell pointedly at a flock that caws mockingly back) I'll take some quiet time.

Another gull lands on the bag, this time a little closer to you. You wave it away. A low mechanical hum becomes audible in the distance, and it gets louder the longer you continue on.

STRANGER

Almost there.

The cart travels on, and in the distance you can slowly see the edge of what looks like a makeshift building— plywood panels and tin roofing with pool noodles cut in half and hooked up to collect rainwater and pour it into a bucket. A few fish are strung up by their tails from old soda can rings and left to dry. A lead dumpster sits nearby.

When the cart crests the hill you can see beyond the shack: a small town sprawls out of the grime and mish-mosh, buildings propped up with everything from liter soda bottles to Styrofoam to a few broken-up old epoxy surfboards. There's maybe twenty "buildings" in a loose circle around a central square, and a few people mill about. There's one large structure that dwarfs the rest: A giant engine, sputtering and trailing plumes of thick black smoke. This is where the mechanical humming is coming from.

If you look even further out, you can see the coast of the island winding into the horizon. The trash continues on and on.

As the stranger starts talking, the light overhead grows shaded. A cloud is passing over.

STRANGER

(Proudly, acknowledging that they were a part of making something out of nothing)

Welcome to Junk City. The biggest un-Incorporated, non-corporate town this side of the Mississippi. The people here all sailed outta the Republic of LA to get to the island back when it was in the middle of the pacific, and we got that big fella (pointing to the engine) outta a drifting cargo ship not too long after. The island ain't an island any more so much as the biggest boat this world has ever seen... (continues rambling)

Something lands on top of the cart. It's not a seagull this time- it's almost like snow: grey-white and delicate, falling in flakes. First one, then two, then a gentle steady flurry.

STRANGER

What the...

There is a flash of light from the west. If the player looks back behind them, they can see a giant plume of white smoke from where they woke up.

The beeping of the device on your necklace suddenly grows faster, and louder, and louder, and faster-

Until it stops.

A roar of fire and light trails overhead, and just as you think that this missile is heading right for you, it whooshes by- past you, past the Stranger-

and heads straight for the town-

It hits and the world freezes. Every citizen of Trash Island is stock-still: curled up behind walls, arms raised protectively in defense from an explosion that is certainly about to happen... any moment now...

The missile is stuck halfway into the ground. It does not explode. It does not burst into flames. White smoke drifts out of the rapidly-cooling exhaust pipe, but that's it--

Until the missile hisses and a valve releases. Thick green-purple miasma drifts out in a molasses advance that is as slow as it is unrelenting. People turn and see it coming and are filled with the singular certainty that it is dangerous, somehow, despite the incredible uncertainty as

to what the danger is; all they know is that it looks bad to breathe and was sent here on a missile.

As they run you can watch the unfurling truth from the top of the hillcrest: where the fog touches the island, trash begins to melt. Houses. A school. The makeshift central square. Each one is subsumed and deflates under the destruction, leaving little more than a puddle of detritus floating in the water where it was.

Even once the gas disseminates into the air and the immediate danger has passed, the absolute silence remains. Where the capital of Trash Island once stood now there shines a circular bay of opaque, plasticine water.

Then, from the thing hanging around your neck, a voice: tinny and pre-recorded, far more chipper than it has any right to be.

DEVICE

Thank you for using the PanOps global positioning tracker system. Goodbye.

FADE OUT:

THE END