

I Shouldn't Have Done This

I Shouldn't Have Done This

This week, I went through CyberSecurity training at work. I learned some cool things, especially this: one of the ways that 'social engineers' or, what folks might lovingly call 'scammers', get through your defenses is apparently by just randomly leaving out USBs outside in the real world.

It's kind of like a sinister geocaching situation where all it does is put malware or ransomware into your computer and hold your Hatsune Miku memes hostage. As I went through this training, I thought of someone who would very much fall into this sort of social engineering trap and that's our new friend Jadusable (Alex Hall)¹, the person behind Haunted Majora's Mask Cartridge or more commonly known as BEN DROWNED.

That's right, this month I'm talking all about one of the most well known/iconic creepypastas that have invaded the internet and the minds of the young people. For those uninitiated, let's take a side step into this keyword: *creepypasta*. What is a creepypasta? Well, according to our long time friend Wikipedia, a creepypasta is a "horror related legend that [has] been shared around the internet"².

Side note, when I was rehearsing, I did say "creamypastas" and I want to propose that as stories that you and I, or our listeners, make up and send in.

Okay, back to the program:

Creepypastas are kind of like our old timey campfire stories where we gather around a campfire and tell each other about the man in the woods. However, it's now more where we sit around on our phones, laptops, tablets and talk about a creepy

¹ https://jadusable.withinhubris.com/Main_Page

² <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Creepypasta>

I Shouldn't Have Done This

husky and sleeping problems caused by that figure in your closet that keeps getting bigger every day.

According to Wiki, creepypastas were thrust into the limelight due to the Slender Man stabbing of 2014³ but it genuinely has been around for quite some time.

Haunted Majora's Mask Cartridge, or more well known as BEN DROWNED was first published in September 2010 on 4chan. The story follows Jadusable, a regular college student who ended up acquiring a copy of Majora's Mask by way of an incredibly eerie garage sale⁴.

I read the story the night before I began my research, and from my understanding, this is how it goes:

Jadusable's roommate gives him an old Nintendo 64.

If you've got access to the script and you're checking it out now, you can [click on this link](#) to look at a N64 or just straight up google it.

For those of us who remember what this thing is, you know that it's a bit of a clunker now compared to its modern counterparts. I used to not be able to hold it correctly because my hands are so fucking small. Additionally, it's how I found out that I can't play video games because I get so fucking dizzy.

Thank you, *Goldeneye*, you bastard.

Anyway, back to our friend Jadusable... His roommate gives him an old Nintendo 64 and so he goes out in search of games to play on the console. He happens upon a strange little garage sale that to him looks fairly weak and kind of creepy. Jadusable

3

<https://www.jsonline.com/story/archives/2020/09/02/slender-man-stabbing-timeline-geyser-weier-cases-wisconsin/3803170002/>

⁴ <https://jadusable.withinhubris.com/Jadusable>

I Shouldn't Have Done This

describes the seller as an older man, who for all intents and purposes is apparently kind of eerie.

He describes the man as “displeasing” though he “couldn't really pinpoint anything - there was just something about [the man] that put [him] on edge”⁵. Which, is I guess, a perfectly fine way to describe someone but also set up the potential that we're about to get into Creepy Town.

Jadusable purchases a game from this One Man Creepy Garage Sale and goes home (with the parting words ‘Goodbye, BEN’, misheard as ‘Goodbye, then’). He now has a copy of Majora's Mask, which is specially given to him by the man. At this point, this is where the bigger creeps start.

He plays the game and goes through some absolute *shit*. He documents several days of torture under this haunted video game, where he's stalked, manipulated, and mentally drained by the titular BEN, not *ISYMPod's* Ben, but BEN.

Who by the end of the story seems to be an entity that has the ability to hack your computer, manifest in the real world, and haunt you in your dreams⁶. BEN is a talented son of a bitch that can rival the best hackers, apparently.

Now, BEN DROWNED is a universe that has many many many aspects to it that can cover several episodes. But before I truly get into it, I have to warn you: I am only covering the HAUNTED CARTRIDGE ARC as this is the entry point for most people who know about this creepypasta. There are a total of 3 arcs in the story, that I read about briefly on the jadusable wiki⁷ (which is where I am acquiring a lot of my story related information).

⁵ [https://jadusable.withinhubris.com/The_Haunted_Cartridge_\(arc\)](https://jadusable.withinhubris.com/The_Haunted_Cartridge_(arc))

⁶ https://creepypastafiles.fandom.com/wiki/BEN_Drowned

⁷ https://jadusable.withinhubris.com/Main_Page

I Shouldn't Have Done This

There are four videos⁸ that accompany this arc, none of which I watched because I'm scared as hell.

So you might think: "That's not complete research!"

To which I say: you're right! But I'm scared! I like myself! I'll take this L and incoming L's.

I quickly read through all of them and it can be entirely compared to reading entire encyclopedias but I can't seem to figure out what's going on, unless I click into a hundred links all at once and download BEN itself into my computer so he can rummage around my intestines at night.

So yeah, bad job - but I didn't know that when we were assigning ourselves topics.

So this doesn't go below the iceberg. It's like a short skip on the pond. A little rock yeet across the river.

Anyway –

As I mentioned, BEN DROWNED is well known and is one of the more iconic creepypastas, joining Slender Man, Russian Sleep Experiment, Smile Dog, Jeff the Killer, and Ted the Caver (which is considered one of the 'first' creepypastas⁹).

BEN DROWNED is an ARG, so it's not real. An ARG is an "interactive narrative that uses the real world as a platform and employs [multiplatform] storytelling to delivery a story that may be altered by players' ideas or actions"¹⁰.

⁸

https://www.theringer.com/2017/3/3/16040930/the-cult-of-zelda-majoras-mask-1b2b2382fb84#_gnsI23z93

⁹ <https://medium.com/bud-blog/the-history-of-creepypasta-da033083f793>

¹⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alternate_reality_game

I Shouldn't Have Done This

[pause]

Ben, are you familiar with any ARGs? Do you have any off the top of your head that you partook in?

[resume post answer]

Some well known examples of ARGs in recent times (on YouTube) are Daisy Brown, Where Is Mary Jane Mendoza, and a whole host of others than you can learn more about on REIGNBOT (a channel that Ben first mentioned on the Momo Bird episode) which I'm going to think is gonna be our best friend when it comes to helping me 'watch' things I am too scared to watch, if I need to.

ARGs are basically 'fictitious' but ground themselves in reality in a way where someone who doesn't know what an ARG is might believe that this thing is happening and is very much real.

A recent example of this, where it kinda went wrong, is on BuzzFeed Unsolved's channel. The video has gone private but it's titled "My Friend Has Disturbingly Vanished (PLEASE HELP)¹¹".

I fully remember when this came up and I watched the comments state that it might not be a great idea because of the fact that BU is grounded in real crimes and events and suddenly mixing in an ARG could potentially make people believe that it's a real crime.

BEN DROWNED as an ARG is not something too necessarily grounded in reality. The concept of a haunted video game housing a malevolent being, hellbent on torturing this kid, releasing itself into the world to torment more people, isn't something you can

¹¹ <https://www.buzzfeed.com/watch/video/129789>

I Shouldn't Have Done This

easily confuse as 'real', even with the game play evidence that Jadasable (Alex Hall) provides.

However, I was able to find an article by Owen Good on Kotaku¹² released around the beginnings of BEN DROWNED that suggested that some might find this real.

A darker and more tragic instance of 'belief' in BEN DROWNED, is something that mirrors some of the topics that we have discussed before. Content warning ahead of discussions of suicide.

You can skip to when I start saying "Let's take a look at what Alex Hall pointed out".

(IF YOU ARE READING THE SCRIPT, PLEASE HEAD TO "Let's take a look at what Alex Hall pointed out")

12 year old Katelyn Davis of Cedartown, Georgia died by suicide in Dec 30, 2016. I will be honest, I am currently unable to verify information regarding an active investigation at the moment, to give you information about her passing and the things that occurred prior to it.

I am only discussing the aftermath where people dug into her history and discovered references to BEN DROWNED. Posts indicated that she was 'speaking' (whether actually through messages, or some other method) to BEN and may have believed that he was real. One blog post indicated that Katelyn and BEN hadn't spoken in months and that she couldn't "live without him". She was doing her best to get in

¹² <https://kotaku.com/the-haunting-of-a-majoras-mask-cartridge-5635521>

I Shouldn't Have Done This

touch with a 'proxy' to Slenderman, who could perhaps get him in touch with BEN, but was unable to do so.

I have read the post itself on a facebook account that has the archived post (remade after her passing to host all her blog posts) and it's incredibly concerning to read but also so much more sadder. Some of her content prior to her passing indicated that she might have been catfished by someone posing as BEN.

In regards to this, Alex Hall (Jadusable) said:

"That was the difficult part with Katelyn," says Hall. "I wondered if I never wrote that story, would that stuff have still happened? Or those girls who [tried to] kill someone with Slender Man a few years back. If that didn't exist, would that have ever happened? No one can ever say for sure. It's a hard moral issue and a tragedy, but I don't think that authors can necessarily be held responsible for what some fans do because of an obvious work of fiction."¹³

Let's take a look at what Alex Hall pointed out: "I don't think that authors can necessarily be held responsible for what some fans do because of an obvious work of fiction".

If you have ever been in the business, the creation, the consumption of fan made work on ArchiveOfOurOwn, twitter, tumblr, instagram, or wherever - you may be familiar with the concept of *textual poaching*.

It is the selective picking (poaching) of a piece of media and then making use of it for your own interpretation or story¹⁴. Henry Jenkin's *Textual Poachers* is a useful text

¹³

<https://www.theringer.com/2017/3/3/16040930/the-cult-of-zelda-majoras-mask-1b2b2382fb84#.gnsI23z93>

¹⁴ Jenkins, Henry. *Textual Poachers*. Routledge 1992. (I didn't re-read it at this time, however I just 'defined' from memory. I am sourcing regardless).

I Shouldn't Have Done This

for this and is something I used a lot when it came to studying fans and their interactions with their media of choice, back in college for Sociology of Pop Culture, and it one of my favourite fandom resources.

I suppose you can also retroactively apply this to my work on our first episode *Birds and the Babadooks!*

Alex Hall partakes in his own textual poaching, by creating BEN DROWNED. It's a creepypasta, yes, but in its barest bones: it's a piece of fiction, written by a fan.

It's fanfiction.

In the same way that fans of the original *Majora's Mask* have created harmless casual theories, full blown conspiracy theories, and branch off stories, just like Hall did, fans of BEN DROWNED have done this right back at him.

From innocent theories, to the insistence that BEN DROWNED is real and has existed beyond Hall's creation¹⁵Hall is experiencing some of what he has done himself.

But why would we do that?

For this case, why would Alex, or anyone else, take what seems to be 'innocent', non terrifying/horror media and subvert it, or some would say 'pervert' it?

Basically, why would we look at something like *Spongebob*, *Rugrats*, *Ed, Edd, n Eddy*, or anything else like that?

Well, *Majora's Mask* already has a touch of horror and dread in it, making it out of place in the *Zelda* canon. I don't know much about it but in the past few days, the most helpful person to me has been Victor Luckerson of *The Ringer* (at the time).

15

<https://www.theringer.com/2017/3/3/16040930/the-cult-of-zelda-majoras-mask-1b2b2382fb84#.gnsI23z93>

I Shouldn't Have Done This

Luckerson says “[*Majora’s Mask*] traps him in a bizarro universe known as Termina and gives him three days to stop the moon from crashing into the world and killing everyone,” and that it has an “intense fixation on death”¹⁶.

It is apparently incredibly different from the Zelda aesthetics and according to Luckerson, it was one of the worst selling Zelda games. As a non-Zelda player, from what I know of the franchise, I never would have thought it would have some sort of dread/existential filled version of it. We all have our dark sides, I guess.

Despite this early failure, much like *The Room* and a whole host of other bad start media pieces, *Majora’s Mask* gained a cult following.

[pause]

Ben, what do you know about the Zelda franchise and, specifically, *Majora’s Mask*?

[resume, post answer]

Majora’s Mask already has some roots in horror/dread and Hall recognised this and ran with it.

Why would someone get drawn into doing this? Perhaps it could just be because it was a fun opportunity. To link it back to some fanfiction writers I know, when the inspiration strikes - it just strikes. You see a piece of media and you make something out of it.

One friend I have currently is making a lot of art for *Our Flag Means Death* from HBO Max. They’re really inspired by it and I see all of the art they create from it. From

¹⁶

<https://www.theringer.com/2017/3/3/16040930/the-cult-of-zelda-majoras-mask-1b2b2382fb84#.gnsI23z93>

I Shouldn't Have Done This

our discussions, it's an inspiring show for someone who is LGBTQ+ and the characters are genuinely great.

In the horror space, maybe inspiration lies in wanting to scare someone, create an experience or some sort, or to engender a fear that we have.

Let's transition over to Haiyang Yang and Kuangjie Zhang's article "The Psychology Behind Why We Love (or Hate) Horror".

In summary, people who like/love horror seek the experience of horror for some stimulation and curiosity. So far, it makes sense right? This is common for a lot of things. Why do risky things? Why would someone skydive? Why would anyone do anything?

For horror/thriller consumers to enjoy what they're consuming, they must have this existing protective frame¹⁷ which contains the following: safety, detachment, and control.

Safety is the idea that this could never happen to you and the understanding that you are safe. You would never encounter this monster because you are not in the woods, do not live near the woods, and you don't ever plan on going into the woods. You will not ever experience this danger, so you are fine.

Detachment is the idea that what you're seeing is fake. You will not be abducted by aliens. You will never be attacked by sharks. You will never be attacked by vampires, werewolves, etc.

Control is how you manage your current situation. Are you able to navigate your way out of it? How much are you in control of, to be able to avoid anything close to what you're seeing?

¹⁷

<https://hbr.org/2021/10/the-psychology-behind-why-we-love-or-hate-horror#:~:text=Frigh%20can%20trigger%20the%20release,zombie%20outbreaks%20to%20alien%20infestations>

I Shouldn't Have Done This

People who avoid horror might not experience any of the desired stimulation and have very little curiosity for it. This could be due to a lack of a protective frame. These people experience these things, they know the horror of it, they are aware they're not safe from it, so they do not seek it out.

It's part of the reason why I very rarely watch horror films from Asian countries. These people look like me and my family. They have fears that I have, culturally. Filipino horror movies, I can never watch. I can't even talk about Filipino horror figures for fear that they might follow me across the ocean. But yes, I'll watch *Hereditary* or *Midsommar*.

Part of the desire to consume is also, per Irving Biederman (Cognitive Neuroscience, USC Dornsife College of Letters, Arts, and Sciences) because we like the "novelty"¹⁸ of it. It's something different from our daily lives and calling back to the Yang and Zhang article it's because we are safe from this 'different' thing.

We might also take it as a learning moment.

Horror stories, Campfire urban legends, and creepypastas may teach us what is scary and the reasons behind these fears.

We learn what to fear and stay away from. As much as we love the general fear, we can also unconsciously learn from stranger danger/abduction stories, stories about couples being attacked at rendezvous spots, and monsters in certain locations.

18

<https://news.usc.edu/151096/why-do-we-like-to-be-scared-usc-experts-explain-the-science-of-fright/>

I Shouldn't Have Done This

[pause]

Think of a horror/thriller movie you watched and what it was about. Strip the horror aspect of it and bring it down to a base level. What was the lesson? What is the story?

[resume post answer]

What could BEN DROWNED teach us? What are the horrors that it tries to point to?

Stranger danger? That old man at the garage sale.

Technology? That good old Y2K systems failure fear. The thought that technology could manipulate us and even unplugging can't save us?

Death? That even if it comes to all of us, we still would never know how to deal with it?

Think of all the things we've covered so far on *I Scream, You Meme*. What are the fears that lay under the stories/memes we've shared?

[END]

Works Cited

Jadusable Wiki, 24 March 2022, https://jadusable.withinhubris.com/Main_Page.

Accessed 20 May 2022.

“Alternate reality game.” *Wikipedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alternate_reality_game.

Accessed 20 May 2022.

“BEN Drowned | Creepypasta Files Wikia | Fandom.” *Creepypasta Files Wiki*,

https://creepypastafiles.fandom.com/wiki/BEN_Drowned. Accessed 20 May 2022.

“Creepypasta.” *Wikipedia*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Creepypasta>. Accessed 20 May 2022.

Fintastic. “The History of Creepypasta. How the subgenre of internet horror... | by

Fin-tastic! | Bud Blog.” *Medium*, 31 October 2020,

<https://medium.com/bud-blog/the-history-of-creepypasta-da033083f793>.

Accessed 20 May 2022.

Good, Owen. “The Haunting Of A Majora's Mask Cartridge.” *Kotaku*, 11 September 2010, <https://kotaku.com/the-haunting-of-a-majoras-mask-cartridge-5635521>.

Accessed 20 May 2022.

Hall, Alex. “The Haunted Cartridge - Jadusable Wiki.” *Jadusable Wiki*,

[https://jadusable.withinhubris.com/The_Haunted_Cartridge_\(arc\)](https://jadusable.withinhubris.com/The_Haunted_Cartridge_(arc)). Accessed 20 May 2022.

Inthavong, Aria. “My Friend Has Disturbingly Vanished (PLEASE HELP).” *BuzzFeed*,

<https://www.buzzfeed.com/watch/video/129789>. Accessed 20 May 2022.

I Shouldn't Have Done This

“Jadusable.” *Jadusable Wiki*, <https://jadusable.withinhubris.com/Jadusable>. Accessed 20 May 2022.

“Jadusable Wiki.” *Jadusable Wiki*, 24 March 2022, https://jadusable.withinhubris.com/Main_Page. Accessed 20 May 2022.

Jenkins, Henry. *Textual Poachers: Television Fans & Participatory Culture*. Routledge, 1992.

Kuhagen, Christopher. “Slender Man stabbing: Timeline of Morgan Geysler, Anissa Weier cases.” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, 2 September 2020, <https://www.jsonline.com/story/archives/2020/09/02/slender-man-stabbing-timeline-geysler-weier-cases-wisconsin/3803170002/>. Accessed 20 May 2022.

Lindberg, Eric. “Why do we like to be scared? USC experts explain the science of fright.” *USC News*, 30 October 2018, <https://news.usc.edu/151096/why-do-we-like-to-be-scared-usc-experts-explain-the-science-of-fright/>. Accessed 20 May 2022.

Luckerson, Victor. “The Cult of 'Zelda: Majora's Mask.'” *The Ringer*, 3 March 2017, <https://www.theringer.com/2017/3/3/16040930/the-cult-of-zelda-majoras-mask-1b2b2382fb84#.gnsI23z93>. Accessed 20 May 2022.

Yang, Haiyang, and Kuangjie Zhang. “The Psychology Behind Why We Love (or Hate) Horror.” *Harvard Business Review*, 26 October 2021, <https://hbr.org/2021/10/the-psychology-behind-why-we-love-or-hate-horror>. Accessed 20 May 2022.