

Chapter -53

An enormous shadow fell over us, as we hid in a narrow alleyway near to the Police Headquarters. We both tried to remain as silent as possible, while the monster moved past like some twisted serpent.

It was the Metro Train that we’d heard earlier and which had easily caught up on the road, though it didn’t seem to have noticed us yet, so we’d been able to hide before it steamrolled our bodies.

The monster was similar to both the Taxi and Humanbus, but dwarfed them both with its absurd height and length. From bottom to top was twenty-five feet or possibly thirty, and its length spanned down the street and around a corner. Unlike the two aforementioned minor Transport creatures, the Metro’s body wasn’t exclusively stitched skin, but rather some amalgamation between polished metal and pulsating living flesh. The flesh was many distinctly-different colors, but red, purple, and brown were most common, and these areas were like blemishes on its otherwise perfect metallic skin, but they also served to keep the various carts connected, like muscles and tendons clinging to a skeleton.

At the front of its long serpent body was a large window with a maelstrom of humanoid ghosts trapped inside and banging against the glass, leaving bloody handprints that faded only seconds after appearing. The window was perhaps its only eye or maybe it had no eyes at all, but below the front window was an enormous mouth that scooped up anything in the way on the road, like cars and random debris. Unlike its smaller cousins, it had no teeth, just a gaping black hole.

It didn’t slither through the street though, no, it was dragged forward by four powerful arms with seven-fingered hands, which grasped the tops or sides of buildings and used them to pull itself forward. Strangely, the hands didn’t cause any structural damage to the buildings, even though it seemed as though they should’ve. They were also entirely fleshy in appearance, with none of the metal on them, perhaps because they were additions to the original body of the Train.

In short, it seemed, from my perspective, like an enormous world-eating serpent that would eat-and-eat, until it grew big enough to devour buildings whole.

Bee appraised it with her glasses, keeping a hand over her mouth while reading whatever appeared, and then shared the result with me through a subvocalized command:

Level 89	'Hitokui, Chika'	World Boss ^x
“[まもなく、あなたたちを飲み込みます。ご注意ください。]”		

Chika Hitokui is a Metro-Train variant of the Public Transport creatures, and given her tremendous strength, she is given a unique name off the bat, as are all Trains and Metros, with their immediate size and power based on the length of the tracks they would normally follow.

For some reason, the System assumed this Metro-Train was Japanese, despite its location, hence the strange mismatch in language. This may make defeating it more difficult than normal, unless you’ve unlocked your inner Weeb.

Although this monster can theoretically crush you in an instant, it should be possible for anyone to beat it, so long as you can get inside its mouth in one piece.

Good luck! We’ll be recording your death!

I breathed out slowly, as the vast World Boss dragged itself past us. One of the four massive hands it used to push-and-pull off of buildings was directly above us, its fingers lodged into the alleyway for leverage. Each of the seven fingers was as thick as my head.

With hardly a sound, the hand pulled itself free to grasp a building further away, while the long serpent body of Chika Hitokui continually moved forward.

For one excruciatingly-long minute, Bee, Panda, and I all just watched the body move past, while its loud voice kept repeating the same announcement phrase over-and-over, the volume so loud that it made my ears ring.

When it was finally completely gone from the middle of the street, we both breathed a sigh of relief.

“Somehow I don’t think I could punch that thing to death,” I muttered.

“The appraisal was quite interesting,” Bee replied, ignoring me. “It said that anyone can theoretically defeat it, but that knowing Japanese helps.”

“Why does it sound like you actually want to try it?” Panda asked.

“Think about it! If it’s like the Taxi, it might have a Mini Game as a requirement for defeating it.”

“No way I’m willingly going into that creature’s mouth!” I protested.

“Its name was kind of weird,” Bee commented absentmindedly. “Chika Hitokui almost sounds like a real name, but if I’m not mistaken, it means ‘Underground People-Eater’.”

“Is that supposed to be a pun based on ‘People Mover’?” I asked.

“At least it’s not as lazy of a name as ‘Humanbus’ or just ‘Taxi’,” Panda said.

“Oh, look, there are people near the Police Station!” Bee said pointing.

Across the street, on the other side of the road that now had a freshly-carved furrow down the middle, Players were coming out of their own hidey-holes. One guy had hid inside a garbage bin, while the rest had hid in doorways or inside alleys like us. They all congregated in front of the imposing sliding-glass front door of the Police Headquarters.

The building was a square brick-and-mortar construction, with a simple mix of dark-grey mortar and red bricks that gave it a rather iconic look. I’d been inside it more times that I could remember since my early teens, and its appearance always filled me with a unique blend of dread and hatred. Now more than ever, it filled me with a need for vengeance. The Taxi had confirmed my long-held theory that the Chief of Police had intentionally framed the murder of the Mayor’s dog on me, so I relished the prospect of caving in his head.

“What do we do?” Bee asked. “Should we kill them?”

“Don’t default to just killing people!” Panda exclaimed.

“Maybe they’re after the Safe Zone Sphere,” I said. “We could team u—”

Before I could finish, the glass door shot open and eight enemies shambled out. They were clad in police uniforms, but their skin was a pale-grey and their heads were missing from the chin and up, replaced by something like the top of a wacky-inflatable-tube man, except it was their skin flapping around, while something like blue light shone out from the inside. Their hands were also changed, having grown long-ass nails that sparked with electricity.

“**STOP RESISTING!**” said one of the enemies, before frying a surprised Player, charring his clothes and skin where the long nails touched.

“Let’s go!” I said and emerged out of the alleyway. Bee was close behind, already releasing her Beetle Bolts from afar, her hits connecting but not immediately killing the creatures.

“They’re level 15!” she yelled. “Look!”

She somehow sent the appraisal my way, despite the fact that I thought that it required us to be close. As I strode across the asphalt, hopping over the deep furrow made by the Metro Train, I read through the description.

Level 15	'Police Fiend'	Enemy <small>x</small>
<i>“Stop resisting!”</i>		

Maybe you were wondering what happened to all the local police officers in your city or maybe you were happy to see them gone entirely. Well... they're not gone, and if you thought they were bad before, you haven't seen the worst of it yet.

These Fiends are a lesser version of the transformed police station's roster, the traffic cops as it were, but that doesn't mean they aren't fond of brutalizing detainees after turning off their body-cams. These guys are especially fond of their built-in tasers.

Oh, and yeah, their heads are pretty messed-up. They took 'open your mind to cosmic influence' a bit too literally, but, so long as you don't look down the open hole to their souls, you'll be fine.

I had no idea what that last bit meant, other than ‘don't aim for the head’, so as I came within reach of a fiend, who was a second away from tasing a woman who'd tripped over herself to get away, I slammed Brock into its torso.

“*Punch.harder()*!”

ACTIVATING SCRIPT: *Punch.harder()*!

```
if(Punch != Kill){  
  Punch.harder();  
}
```

SCRIPT FAILED SUCCESSFULLY DUE TO: *unCollide.glitchCollision()*!

The impact sent the fiend straight into one of its friends, the Glitch Collision making them fuse together. The carried-over momentum turned them into a spinning top, before they simply imploded in a shower of black steaming blood and goop.

A lightning nail scraped against my flank, sending a minor shock through my system, though my stolen armor absorbed the rest. I kicked the fiend in the knee, producing a loud *crunch* as its brittle bones broke and the limb bent the wrong way, then I uppercutted its chin and sent it flying into the air. Or, well, the top half of its body, the rest stayed on the ground. As it continued to stretch, its middle tore and split, with the top flying off somewhere to the next street over.

A *pop* sounded from nearby, just as one of Bee's spells, no doubt the Beetle Blast, destroyed the torso of another of the monsters.

By now, the Players who’d gathered in front of the building had recouped from their initial shock and helped us lay waste to the remaining four.

As the last one died to a cascade of Beetle Bolts, bat strikes, and stones from a slingshot, we all took a breather. Out of the lot of them, two had died to electrocution, but they didn’t seem to mourn over their friends. Seven Players besides Bee and I stood before us, but they were clearly weak.

She came up next to me, her arms raised slightly, as if she expected them to jump us. Perhaps having Annabella and Birthday Boy chase her down with a mob for no reason had made her paranoid.

“The highest level is four,” she whispered to me. “It’s the guy with the slingshot.”

“Fak yea, bruv!! I levelled up!!”

I blinked in surprise, having momentarily forgotten that he could level up.

“Don’t move!” Bee warned, aiming her palm at one of the people. It was the woman I’d saved. All of the enemies had left behind glowing wisps and she’d tried to loot one of them.

“Hey! We helped kill them too, so we get a share!” she protested. Her voice was hoarse, as though she hadn’t had enough to drink lately. I also noticed how her lips were desiccated to the point of the skin splitting, as well as how her hair was unwashed and clumped together. Her eyes and cheeks were sunken slightly from malnutrition and she wore a dark-green sweater, leather gloves, jeans with knee-pads, and sturdy boots.

“We saved your asses, so it’s ours!” Bee said, not giving an inch.

I looked around at the bodies. “They probably don’t have much anyway, just let them take it. They look pitiful after all.”

Bee turned to look at me. “Are we charity workers all of a sudden?”

“Bee, at least let Gambit do a good thing for once! It’s so out of character I’m wondering if this might be a turning point!”

“It’s neither charity nor a turning point,” I said to them both, the Players in front of us watching the exchange with a mix of dread and confusion. “I just think that maybe we’re better served not making enemies everywhere we go.”

“Fine,” Bee said in a tone that meant it definitely wasn’t. “But we’re taking all the loot from what we kill in the Dungeon!”

I nodded. “Of course.”

“Why is there a panda plushie on your shoulder?” asked one of the Players suddenly.

I turned to look at the guy. He had maybe just turned eighteen, but his youthful face was marred by what he’d experienced in the last week and black rings surrounded his eyes.

“You see him?” I asked, pointing to Panda.

The guy nodded, his ginger curls bobbing slightly. “Am I not supposed to?”

“Does anyone else see him?” I asked the other six Players.

Everyone shook their heads.

The guy who’d spoken up suddenly looked worried. “Am I going to die?”

I walked over and patted him on the shoulder. “It’s nice to meet a fellow liberated spirit. Also, yes, of course you’re going to die. We all will, but until then, keep spreading the truth!”

Then I spun around and walked towards the doors of the Police Headquarters with Bee right beside me.

WARNING!

Now entering level 15 Dungeon ‘Police Headquarters’!