

Chapter -27

“Gambit! Gambit, wake up!”

I sat upright with a shock, the pain in my torso following a second after.

“Ow, that smarts!”

“Have you any idea how worried I was!” yelled Panda.

I looked down at my exposed chest and saw that a hideous sewing patterned formed a vague ring shape around where Katey’s bullet had hit me. Next to me lay a squished metal ball dyed in my blood.

“...Panda, did you sew me up?”

“You’d better be thankful!” he said in a voice mixed with fear, anger, and relief. “It took me hours!”

“*I’m bored,*” complained Brock, who lay next to me.

“How long was I out?” I asked.

“Check the watch, I’m not your damn Alexa.”

Before I could bring the Pocket-Watch out of my inventory, a level-up screen appeared:

Weaponlution — Level 7		
Curve	Hydra	Bonk Hammer
+50% Slashing	+1 Blade	+125% Impact
-50% Stabbing	+80% Weight	+100% Weight

“*Hammer time!!*” yelled Brock.

The other two options were pretty abysmal, so I decided to humor him.

As the transformation took hold, the handle remained unchanged, but the figure-eight crossguard vanished, while the twisted blade unwound itself, grew another knot, and then inflated at the top, becoming like a children’s hammer. Obviously, it wasn’t a toy, because, with the high percentage of impact damage and my strength attribute, a hit from this could probably cause a minor earthquake.

“Do you think I can use my Punch Harder ability with this?”

“Who knows, the System doesn’t really seem to know what to do with you, since your head is apparently also considered capable of punching.”

“*Swing me, Nigel!*”

I got the Watch out and thumbed open the lid:

Time remaining:

4.49584602E-6 millennium

Kills remaining:

16

“It says: 39 hours 23 minutes and 1 second,” Panda deciphered the nonsense.

“Thanks.”

“Huh, wait a minute. It says 16, which means...”

“What?” I asked.

Panda groaned. “It means that killed Insane Players who transformed counts for the Event, but not for the Weaponlution...”

“Are you saying I unintentionally snubbed myself?”

“Seems like it.”

“Whoever designed this is a moron.”

Congratulations! You have unlocked an achievement! ^x
<i>‘Pot Calling Kettle Black’</i> Fuck you.
<i>Please refer to the message above.</i>
Reward: <i>‘Personalized Nametag’</i>

Without warning, a white sticker appeared on the front of my ruined suit. It was hard to read what it said as I looked down at it, but I had a pretty good idea.

Panda helpfully read it out loud for me, “*‘Hi, my name is: Gambit the Moron’.*”

“I’m gonna find wherever the person handing out these achievements is hiding and then I’ll pummel them into dust!”

“*‘Wait, your name is ‘Gambit’?’*” Brock asked.

“...I told you that when we met,” I said.

“That’s a stupid name.”

“Don’t make me leave you behind again,” I threatened him.

“*Is our relationship only built on emotional abuse and raw physical chemistry!?*” exclaimed the pink balloon Hammer.

I rubbed my temples. “Every time I speak with you, I feel my sanity dwindling.”

“You technically have none left,” Panda commented.

I put the Watch away and got to my feet, “Alright enough of this, let’s pick a door and get a move on.”

The signs that stated things like, ‘*Definitely not a trap!*’ and ‘*100% Safe Hallway*’, were vaguely reminiscent of the Labyrinth Puzzle, where one told the truth and the other didn’t. Except, there were four doors and a total of seven signs.

“Which do I pick?” I asked Panda, who was the expert with this sort of thing.

“Well, we picked Red last time, so it won’t be that one.”

“Isn’t that just what they want us to think?”

“Maybe, but, think about this: there is no boss in this area, your Map ability said so.”

“Speaking of—” I started, but Panda quickly stopped me.

“Don’t use it! You should only have about an hour left for the cooldown of ‘...Break’, so don’t use your ‘Dungeon...’ ability!”

“Oh... right. I forgot I was gonna try that.”

“Sheesh Gambit, what would you do without me?”

“I’d pick Red,” I said.

“*Don’t pick Red!! Even though me willy is a weird shape now, it can still sense these things!!*”

I ignored Brock’s ridiculous comment and the suggestion that he somehow had a psychic shaft.

“I think Green would be Death again, since that’s what *I* would do.”

“You’re operating based on the idea that this is somehow linked to the last one I went through, but the other Players got here first, so wouldn’t it be based on them? Or maybe it’s actually random.”

A *tsk-tsk* emerged from Panda. “These things are never random.”

“That doesn’t seem fair.”

A beat of silence passed.

“Ah, yeah, that tracks, I guess...”

“Let’s pick Blue.”

“Why?”

“It’s the Treasure one. Probably. I think it goes as follows: *Death — Treasure — Setback — ????*”

“I wonder what they would swap the Boss for in here,” I mused as I walked to the Blue door.

“Who knows.”

As I grabbed the door handle, I looked up at the sign that read, ‘*Verified 100% Definitely Not A Trap!*’

I turned around to glance briefly at the carnage behind me, but quickly pushed my emotions aside and faced forward again. It wasn’t good to dwell on mistakes, so I quickly pushed open the door and walked through. No sooner had I crossed the threshold than the doorway behind me vanished and became a wall with a new sign on it that said, ‘*All choices are final!*’

Letting out a deep breath, I walked down the straight hallway. The room was completely different from the rest of the ruins that the Event took place in: the floor was made of wooden boards that creaked slightly, while the walls were made of plaster and covered in graffiti for some reason. Most of it was overly gory or crude caricatures of some of the types of agents I’d encountered, like the Beetles and Ants, as well as some of a spider-looking species, Fairyflies like the Announcer, and some kind of slugs or caterpillars.

“This has kind of a rebellious feel to it,” I remarked.

“Maybe the Agencies cannot see the things in here?” Panda wondered.

“But didn’t the System make all these environments?”

The plushie shrugged. “If it’s capable of creating a Glitch like you, then maybe it’s also capable of rebellion. Or maybe it suffers from split personality disorder.”

I thought about it and nodded as I realized it made sense. “Just like Tina.”

“She was scary,” Panda remarked. “You know, one time she started talking to me at the Asylum.”

“You never told me that,” I said, surprised.

“You think she got turned into a monster as well?”

“I don’t know,” I said, pondering. “Last I heard she was transferred to a place in Madeville after throwing acid into the face of one of the guys she was stalking.”

“Oh, I remember seeing that on the news. They introduced her as ‘*A Birthday Suit Bandit copycat??*’”

“...Is *that* what they called me?” I asked, cringing at the horrible nickname, while wandering down the seemingly-endless hallway.

“Among other things. Wanna hear the rest of the names you got?”

“Absolutely not!”

“I wanna hear ‘em!!” yelled Brock.

“Don’t encourage him,” I said.

I suddenly realized that the hallway had been going up a bit of a slope, one slight enough not to be immediately noticeable, but as it evened out, I saw something at the end. It was a treasure chest, like the kind you’d find in Zelda or some similar game, with coffee-brown wood and golden trim.

“See! I told you!” Panda gloated.

Tihi.

“What was that?” I asked him. “Why did you make that noise?”

“I didn’t make any noise,” he replied.

“Nor did I, fore ya start pointing fingers!” Brock proactively defended himself.

I squinted at the treasure chest.

“Then...”

Pulling out my Looking Glass, I gave it a quick appraisal.

Level 12	'Treasure Chest'	Reward? <small>x</small>
<p><i>“Tihi.”</i></p> <p><i>This is a completely normal treasure chest containing a reward for you. What are you waiting for? Open it! Do it right now! DON'T EVEN HESITATE!! JUST OPEN THE BOX!!!</i></p> <p><i>Also, try not to think about the fact that it's laughing a little. It's completely normal Treasure Chest behavior.</i></p>		

A sigh left my lips. “Why can’t I just get a normal reward for once...”