

## Chapter -56

I punched a Police Fiend in the torso with Brock, the impact of the squishy balloons turning its skin purple for some reason, before it was sent skipping down the hallway full of temporary holding cells, each impact with the floor leaving a stain of its blood.

Bee was firing her Beetle Bolts at the group of Fiends charging our way with their electric claws, but it took at least three shots for her to take just one down, so she was rapidly burning through her Mana.

Samantha had used some kind of ability called ‘Showoff’ and now her hands and feet were glowing. From what I could tell, it was a dual-purpose buff that increased her Strength and Dexterity.

As she ran past me, her weapon transforming into an axe that she chopped against the side of a Fiend’s neck, I realized that she was wearing heels. Along with her immaculate dark-blue business suit and blonde perm, she really did give off strong ‘heartless politician’ vibes. That being said, she was no slouch in a battle, as she cut off the weird flappy head of the Fiend, using her axe, before transforming it into a two-handed sword that she swung to bat away the two creatures right behind it.

I shot forward, not wanting to leave it all to her, and punched a Fiend so hard it flew through the wall and into a cell, where its body broke against the simple bed. With a backhanded slap, I sent another Fiend into the wall on the other side of the hallway, but it simply splattered against the soulless white paint, staining it with its dark blood.

“Beetle Blast!” Bee shouted, hitting one in the abdomen, before the internal explosion tore its body in half. I finished it off with a hard stomp on its neck, turning just in time to witness Samantha killing the last one with a spear.

“You two aren’t half-bad,” she commented. “This is the first time anyone has been able to keep up with me.”

“Maybe you just surround yourself with weaklings,” I replied.

“Your weapon is really cool,” Bee told her.

“Thanks. It’s quite strong, but fairly limiting, since it has to transform its shape after every kill I get.”

“I wish I’d gotten a weapon from the Event,” she complained.

“I’m glad it ended early,” she said wistfully, as we began to pick through the Leftovers of the nine we’d killed, the two I’d crushed with the door included in that count.

“Oh, I leveled up!” Bee said excitedly. “Just two more and I can evolve!”

From the loot, after splitting it amongst us, all we got were three Game Coins each. All the Fiends I’d killed with Brock directly were purple now and gave off a smell of synthetic grape. It was hard to tell if it had any effects other than cosmetic, but I couldn’t help but wonder if hitting another Player with Brock would curse them with the same damaged taste buds as me. If that was the case, it would be almost too cruel to use.

“You know,” Samantha started, “If the Game Event had run its course, only a max of 1000 people would have survived. I don’t know why it ended early, but whoever was the reason for it happening saved thousands of lives.”

I scoffed, but didn’t say anything else.

“Why are you after the Safe Zone Sphere?” she asked.

I shrugged. “I just want it because it’s special.”

“...You’re not trying to build a Safe Zone?”

“Not really, no.”

She frowned. “Well, the one I get from here I’ll use to shelter all those too under-leveled or traumatized to deal with this new world.”

“I think she has a Savior Complex,” Panda remarked.

“Makes me sick,” I muttered.

“What’s that?” Samantha asked, clearly having heard what I said.

“I said your words make me sick,” I told her. “The System made you the ‘hero’ of this region and you’re really leaning into it, right? But you’re no better than me or anyone else. You got number one in the Event, which means you killed twenty-five Players the fastest. Not really much of a Hero if you are able to just kill people that easily.”

“I fight for the Greater Good, I always have,” she said, justifying her actions. She didn’t even seem fazed about killing other Players, yet I was supposed to be the ‘crazy’ one here.

“You know what the Greater Good is?” I asked.

“What?”

“A fucking convenient excuse to commit atrocities.”

Bee grabbed me by the arm. “Let’s go.”

“Yeah, let’s get this over with, I’m afraid I might catch something from this lady if we stick around for too long.”

The two of us walked out of the hallway with all the cells, leaving Samantha behind. Before she could catch up to us, we’d crossed the threshold that would lead out into the lobby area. However, that’s not where we went.

No, as soon as we crossed through the doorway, it was like we were in freefall. Though it was more a sensation than actual falling.

The surroundings changed and darkened, before a message appeared:

**WARNING!**

**Now entering level 30 Sub-Dungeon ‘The Siren’s Lair’!**

“Ah, what the shit...”

“Why are we in a parking lot?” Bee asked, looking around in confusion, but still holding my arm tightly. I wondered if she was scared.

I pulled my arm out of her grip and walked a bit away, looking at our surroundings. It was a dark indoor parking garage, with a gray concrete floor painted with white markings and brown-orange lights spaced out at even intervals in the ceiling, yet they somehow didn’t provide enough illumination to offset the eerie shadows. There were also ramps leading up and down, and I got a strange sense of nostalgia and dread from looking around. The garage spaces were half-full at the moment, but it looked like the cars had been here for many years, with their owners just never returning to get them.

“It doesn’t really look like a ‘lair’,” Panda remarked from where he sat on my shoulder.

“How the fuck do we get back?”

“You could always teleport out.”

“Ah, right, good idea. Bee, come here.”

She walked over to me and I grabbed her wrist.

“*back\_door.bat*,” I said, picturing the hallway with the cells that we’d just left.

Immediately our surroundings changed, depositing us back in the sterile lock-up with the ruined bodies of the Police Fiends all around us. Samantha was nowhere to be seen however, even though we’d just been gone for a few seconds. It was quite possible that she’d ended up in the same place as us, but somehow I felt like that wasn’t quite right. No doubt her Protagonist Class made sure that she got the ability to shine on her own, rather than playing second fiddle to me.

Too bad for her and the showrunners who were clearly showing her favoritism, because we’d come back and we’d totally crash her solo party.

However, as soon as I took a step towards the exit, the same sensation of falling overtook me and returned us to the garage.

<b>Congratulations! You have unlocked an achievement! <sup>x</sup></b>
<i>‘The Pull of the Backrooms’</i> <b>Realized there is no escape.</b>
<i>You may be a slippery little <b>Glitch</b>, but there are some rules you cannot bend quite that easily.</i>
<i>You’re stuck in here, and the only way to escape is to defeat the thing that calls this place ‘home’.</i>
<b>Reward:</b> The somber realization that you’re screwed

“Yeah, that’s not good,” Panda commented.

Then suddenly a police siren blared from below. It was so loud that it made my ears hurt and scrambled my thoughts briefly.

A few seconds passed, with the siren show no signs of letting up.

“I think it’s coming closer,” Bee said ominously.