

## Chapter -52

“I just received a Benefactor Gift,” Bee said, while we were walking down the street in the direction of the Police Headquarters.

I had to admit that my new loincloth was actually quite nice, fitting me in all the right ways, although the warmth it emanated onto my skin was still no less unsettling.

“What’d you get?” I asked.

“A slice of pie. It has some strange fruits in it that I’ve never heard of, but sounds delicious.”

My mouth salivated at the mention of food.

“The message attached told me to eat up and be healthy, since I’m just skin and bones.”

“Sounds like the grandmother treatment,” Panda remarked.

“I wish I’d gotten food from my Benefactor,” I complained.

“Instead you got a dominatrix,” the plushie laughed.

“I bet Gambit has some weird fans,” Bee remarked.

“What kind of Demon is the All-Mother?” I asked her.

“She’s not a Demon, instead she’s apparently something called an ‘Absolute’.”

“What’s that?”

“No idea.”

Panda shivered where he sat on my shoulder. He’d once again appeared there without me noticing.

“You okay, buddy?”

“... Yeah. Just don’t offend the All-Mother, okay? Absolutes are scary as shit.”

“You know what they are?”

“It’s probably best I don’t tell you,” he replied.

I looked at him suspiciously.

“Don’t forget to check the brain you picked up from the Taxi!” he said, trying to change the subject.

“You’re lucky I don’t actually care that much,” I told him, then pulled the gooey raisin brain out of my inventory and inspected it.

**‘Tax Brain’**

x

<p><i>The brain of a Taxi that you defeated by completing its Mini Game. A shred of sentience is still within this shriveled-up raisin and in order to access the power trapped within, all you have to do is say ‘I love you’ sincerely.</i></p> <p><i>Show some vulnerability. Say it!</i></p>
<p><b>Weight: 1 Pandas</b></p>

I sighed at looked at the raisin in my hands. It was surprisingly-difficult to say the words, even though it was just to the dried-up brain of a Taxi. The only time I’d ever said those words and meant them was when I’d had to give away my pet Bull Frog ‘Kevin’.

“I love you.”

Surprised, I turned to look at where Bee had stopped as well, she’d managed to get the words out before me. She was surprisingly-confident at times like these.

“I love you,” I whispered to the brain.

<p><b>Choose your reward!</b> <span style="float: right;">x</span></p>
<p><i>How romantic!</i></p>
<p>Pick one of the options: <b>‘hitch.Hike( )’</b>   ‘Skater Boy’   ‘Scooter Guy’</p>

I clicked on each of the options to figure out what they did, though the Skater one immediately piqued my interest.

<p><b>‘hitch.Hike( )’</b> <span style="float: right;">x</span></p>
<p><i>Passive</i></p> <p><i>While on a road, anything you mount turns into a vehicle that automatically goes where you are heading.</i></p>

*Results may vary wildly, mostly because we’re not sure how this works and thus can’t really comment on potential use-case scenarios...*

### **‘Skater Boy’**

x

*Ability*

*Admit it, you’ve always wanted to be that guy. Well, now you can be! Skate! Do a flip! Grind a railing! Sustain eighteen compound fractures to your skull! Wooh!*

***Summon a semi-sentient Skateboard that works like normal, but picks up speed if you perform tricks and has a slight disregard for the rules of reality so long as one of your feet is on it.***

***Cooldown: 30 minutes***

***Duration: 10 minutes***

### **‘Scooter Guy’**

x

*Ability*

*“Vaffanculo!”*

***Summon a semi-sentient Vespa that works like normal, but which curses in Italian when you beep the horn and only works so long as you are disobeying traffic laws.***

***Cooldown: 30 minutes***

***Duration: 10 minutes***

“Not sure I trust the first option,” I said. “Also, how am I meant to make it work? Do I just sit on *anything* and it takes me where I want to go?”

“Sounds like it. I think the Skateboard one makes the most sense,” Panda commented.

“I picked a movement skill that lets me fly upward and maneuver around, which should work well with my Beetle Breeze that lets me glide.”

“You should use the Party Hat too, if you haven’t already.”

“It’s a Boss item?”

I nodded.

“I almost threw it away once...” she replied, sounding glad she hadn’t.

“It’s a lesson to inspect any reward you get,” Panda said.

“Watch them only give us junk,” Bee retorted, perfectly mirroring my thoughts.

She pulled out the Party Hat and strapped it under her chin, while I selected Skater Boy.

Panda was suddenly back on her shoulder and looked at her skill options.

“You’re not as lucky as Gambit,” he commented. “She got offered ‘Party Never Ends’ like you, but not the ‘Birthday Gift’ option, which would’ve been good.”

“What did she get instead?”

“‘Birthday Wrapped’,” she replied. “It wraps up a target and makes it impossible for them to break free if their Strength is less than my Intelligence, but someone else can unwrap them.”

“That sounds good though, right?”

“I’m picking my Class option instead,” she replied. “Look.”

<b>‘Beetle Battlemage’</b>	x
<i>Passive</i>	
<i>Did you know that all Beetles are basically wizards? Ironically, they’re not as tough as their armor makes them seem. Those employed by the REPD are, however, what would be considered Battlemages, meaning they can take a lot more hits and are specialized in fighting up-close.</i>	

*Receive a 25% bonus to your Defense attribute and a 50% bonus to all damage inflicted at a range of less than 10 feet with any Beetle spell.*

“Damn, that’s really powerful.”

“Show me what you got from the Taxi Brain!” she insisted.

I smiled in expectation, then held out my hand and said, “Skater Boy!”

A fleshy 1-foot-wide 8-foot-long stitched and wrinkled piece of skin that had a rainbow of bruise colors appeared in the air in front of me, before landing on its four obsidian wheels. Amongst the dark-browns, blue-blacks, and purple-greens of the board were a multitude of tiny glass-bead-sized eyeballs that swiveled around, and at the very front of the board was a mouth with disorderly dark-yellow buckteeth.

I let out a disgusted sound. “This isn’t a skateboard! It’s a longboard!”

“*That’s* your only complaint!?” Panda exclaimed from where he sat on my shoulder.

[OH BOY! LET’S SKATE!]

“Ah fuck, it talks... Because, of course it does...”

Rumbling and tremors underfoot suddenly reminded me that we were in the middle of a large street with the groove of an enormous monster torn through it. Swallowing my disgust for the misnomer of my new vehicle and the fact that it spoke like the Taxi, I put a foot tentatively onto the board.

[WICKED!]

I shuddered in further disgust.

The tremors suddenly got worse and a loud-as-hell voice rang out across the city.

[まもなく、お客様方はわたしの中に入ります。出口はございません。逃げるのはおやめください。]

“What the hell does *that* mean?”

Bee tilted her head as she tried to decipher the voice. When it repeated a moment later, sounding closer than before, she translated its meaning, “It’s Japanese, for some reason, and says, ‘*Soon, you will enter my body. There is no exit. Please do not run away.*’ It’s very polite.”

“What the fuck, that’s creepy as hell!”

“Wasn’t the metro between Castleburg and Madeville made by a Japanese company?” Panda suddenly asked.

“...Is that why it’s speaking Japanese? Pretty sure its announcements were always in English when I used to ride it.”

Bee nodded.

“Either way, we should get out of here,” I said, then kicked off from the ground and began rolling along the asphalt road.

“Beetle Blastoff!” I heard Bee yell, and I looked back to see her shoot diagonally into the air with the wings unfolded from her back and moving ridiculously-fast. A humming was also emanating from her, similar to that of the Beetle Agents’ flying potato vehicle, but less anxiety-inducing.

I felt a sudden urge to perform a trick, so I did a Pop Shove-It, which shouldn’t have been possible with the long board, but yet somehow worked, perhaps thanks to the sentience in the thing. As I landed, the mouth was behind my backfoot since the board had spun around.

[GNARLY!]

I groaned, but felt a sudden burst of speed overcome the board. Moments later I started going downhill, which only made me go even faster. Bee was gliding through the air above and ahead of me. At this rate, we’d get to the Police Headquarters within just a few minutes.