

Chapter -30

I looked at the tooltip for the new ability I’d created, while the ground nearby lit up with the three overlapping pink triangles. Clearly someone had thought it was necessary to have arbitration for this new skill, or at least that was my guess. As I read it over, I understood why.

‘Dungeon-Break’ x
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Fusion Ability</i></p> <p><i>Allows you to bring up a detailed map of the Dungeon you are inside of and perform one of the following commands:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Delete Dungeon Barrier -- Teleport to Location -- Eject All Players & Enemies – <p style="text-align: center;">WARNING!</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Possession of this Ability is prohibited!</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Utilizing this Ability to break a Dungeon constitutes major</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">System Subversion!</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Duration: 2 minutes</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Cooldown: 12 hours</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Cooldown Requirement: Kill 1 Boss</p>

“This is bad, Gambit! We need to get out of here!”

“Do you really think we could run from an Adjudicator?” I asked him.

“*Bonk ‘em with me!!*” yelled Brock eagerly.

Then it was like my ears popped from a sudden pressure spike and a shape manifested in the light. I was standing up and only a few feet behind me lay the hole down to the floors below, but I still took a step back inadvertently.

The Adjudicator appeared before me and I realized it was the same that I’d seen just before entering the Event. Time slowed to a crawl, but it was only obvious because the dust and debris falling from above was frozen in the air, since both the Adjudicator and I could move at normal speed.

WE MEET AGAIN, PLAYER.

“Hello,” I replied. Blood was dripping from my nostrils and it felt like bugs were nesting in my ear canals, but it was kind of nice in a way.

PLEASE PUT ON SOME CLOTHES.

“Ah, my bad,” I said and equipped my torn and frayed suit.

**I HAVE BEEN SUMMONED HERE TO INVESTIGATE A REPORT OF MALICIOUS
PLAYER BEHAVIOUR THAT HAS THE POTENTIAL TO RUIN THE INTEGRITY OF
THE GREAT GAME.**

“We’re just following the path laid out to us!” Panda argued.

The eyes on the upside-down pyramid all swiveled around to look at the plushie who was back on my shoulder. The fact that the Adjudicator could see him was a bit of a surprise, but it would’ve been more concerning if he couldn’t.

HMM.

**THERE IS NOTHING IN MY REPORTS ABOUT YOU GUIDING THIS PLAYER.
PECULIAR, BUT I WILL ALLOW IT FOR NOW.
TO THE MATTER AT HAND:
THE MATRIACH OF THE REPD BELIEVES THIS PLAYER WILL BRING RUIN TO
THE SYSTEM BECAUSE OF THIS NEW ABILITY.
DO YOU HAVE A COUNTERARGUMENT?**

“If I wasn’t meant to have it, then why give me all the parts to make it??”

The Adjudicator’s eyes swiveled back to me and I tried not to look at the floating ball with an eye inside a mouth that hovered above its main body.

**WHAT DO YOU PLAN TO DO WITH THIS ABILITY?
DO YOU WISH TO EJECT ALL PLAYERS FROM THIS EVENT?**

“No. I want to teleport to wherever the Announcer is hiding and kill her.”

All the eyes on the Adjudicator’s body blinked simultaneously.

**AMUSING.
THE ANNOUNCER IS LEVEL 60.
SHE WILL CRUSH YOU.
BUT I WILL ALLOW IT.
YOU MAY KEEP YOUR NEW ABILITY FOR NOW.**

“Eh... thank you?”

Without so much as a “You’re welcome”, the Adjudicator vanished, taking the intense pressure with him and making time resume its normal pace. Droplets of blood fell from my chin and down onto the ground.

“Let me see if I get this right...” Panda began. “The Agents of the Great Game, specifically the Probing Department, filed a complaint about your new ability, since it has the power to eject all Players from this event, thereby saving them?”

I shrugged.

“But he let you keep it if you just use it to teleport to where the Announcer is?”

“What’s the point you’re trying to make?” I asked.

“Gambit... you have the power to save all the Players remaining in the Event!”

“Why would I do that?”

“...Are you kidding me?”

“I thought you were a big thinker, Panda,” I replied. “You obviously should go for the bigwigs to manifest long-term change! If I release all the Players by ejecting them from the Event it doesn’t change anything.”

“There’s no assurance that killing the Announcer will stop the Event.”

“I don’t care.”

“*I’m bored,*” groaned Brock.

“I’ll hit stuff with you soon enough,” I promised him. Then held out my hand dramatically and said, “*Dungeon-Break.*”

ACTIVATING DUNGEON MAP

Total Player number: 16809

Nearest Player: 226 yards

Total Enemy number: 438

Nearest Enemy: 671 yards

Nearest Boss: N/A

Nearest Exit: N/A

The map that appeared was leagues apart from the one when it was just called ‘Dungeon...’, as it had zoom features, name-search functionality, room labels, names and levels for Players and enemies, hidden doors and caches, and many other minor things I felt I didn’t have the time to dive into, since the skill was only active for two minutes.

As I moved it around, I saw how the edges of the vast ruins were lined with what was called a ‘Dungeon Barrier’, which, if I had to guess, was the weird hair-like tapestry of screaming faces that I’d encountered in the Asylum when I punched a hole in the wall. I wondered if, by deleting it, I could basically go ‘out of bounds’, kind of how some games had gaps in the world geometry that allowed you to slip through and walk along the ‘outside’ of the world to bypass things.

“I can’t find the amphitheater,” I muttered, annoyed.

“Try zooming out,” Panda suggested.

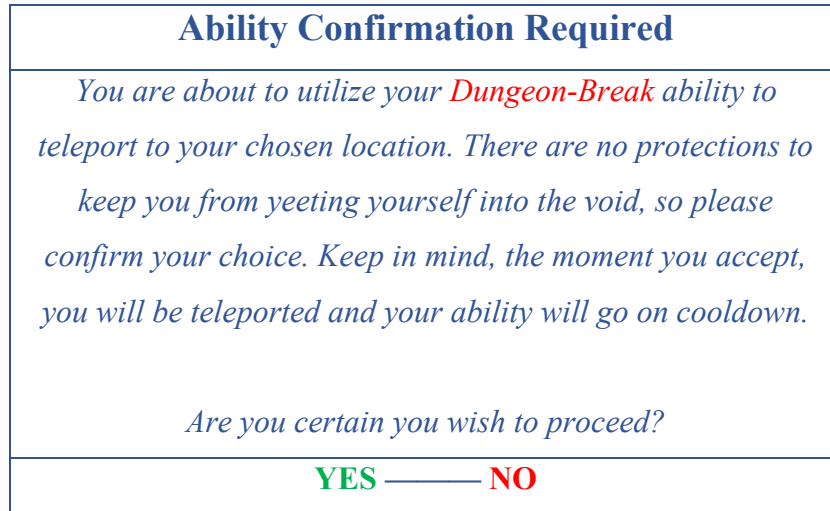
I clicked the (-) to zoom out, until the entire ruins was quite small.

“It’s right there,” the plushie said, pointing to the far edge of the map screen.

I had to squint to see it, but, sure enough, the theater lay hundreds of miles away from the ruins in the massive underground cavern we were in. I used my finger to pan over to it, then clicked the (+) button to zoom back in.

In the center was the amphitheater, and next to it was something called the ‘Production Control Room’, as well as a ‘Green Room’ and ‘Commentary Booth’. I knew this was where I wanted to go.

Since I figured a bastard like the Announcer would be in the Green Room, and a grey marker showed that there was a person there, who was neither a Player nor Enemy, I clicked on this and a map pin appeared with the option ‘Teleport to Location’. I clicked the option.



“Oh god, not this again,” I complained. I clicked ‘Yes’ and dreaded the three additional follow-up confirmations, but instead I felt the ground drop away from under me, as darkness overtook my vision and I experienced the sensation of freefalling.

“Weeeeeee...!” yelled Brock excitedly.

I came to a sudden halt, appearing on a fancy round bed covered in fur blankets. A person next to me let out a gasp, and I whirled around with Brock raised over my head.

“Ohai, Gambit! Why do you have a balloon hammer?”

I blinked, the mind-fog of the teleportation quickly fading.

“Bee!” Panda yelled. “I missed you!”

“Hi Panda.”

“Bee? What are you doing here?”

“I was pulled into the Event with you, but arrived in this room because I’m a minor. So, I’ve just been waiting here and watching the screens in the Commentary Booth, while Riii is working.”

“Riii?” I asked.

“The Announcer.”

I frowned.

“I’ve come here to kill her.”

Bee nodded as though she knew that already. “She said you’d come here.”

“She’s been watching me closely?”

“Mhmm, she said that you had avoided being crucified, so she’d do it herself.”

“I’m not scared of a midget like her.”

“Gambit, they’re called ‘Little People’,” she corrected me.

“Whatever, I’m gonna kill her.”

“And then what?”

“Then I’ll go to the Production Control Room.”

“Okay! I’ll show you the way to the Commentary Booth first then.”

“You should probably stay out of the fight.”

She nodded. “Riii told me that, as long as she is alive, I’ll be invulnerable here. But it wears off if I try to attack her. She also arranged for the Child Protective Services to come get me after the Event has concluded.”

“There’s plenty of time before then,” Panda said. “But, if this moron’s idea actually ends the Event early and saves people, then we’d better hurry.”

I got up from the round bed and Bee grabbed my hand and led me through the room. It was like a makeup trailer mixed with a personal apartment, as it had a simple kitchen, the bed, a bathroom, but also a massive mirror and a counter full of powders and weird bugs writhing in jars.

As we left the Green Room, we came out onto a cardboard-like scaffolding that was raised above the ground below, where the back of the amphitheater lay, with the stage at the end. The scaffolding shifted ominously as we walked across it to a round bulbous building that looked like a wasp hive.

“I’ll wait out here,” Bee told me. “Good luck.”

I gritted my teeth and walked up to the door of the Commentary Booth.