

Chapter -12

As the sound of squeaking steps echoed loudly down the hallway close to the table, which I was standing atop of with a pizza-slice-sized piece of pineapple in my hands, a man’s voice yelled from the ball pit twenty yards away further into the room, “You’ve got to hide!”

I didn’t need to be told twice, as I scooped up Panda in my arms, as well as a wheel-sized pepperoni piece, and leapt off the sticky plastic table. While sailing through the air, the squeaking steps grew louder and were accompanied by slobbering breathing, as though the person making the sound was drooling profusely.

Running across the playground-asphalt, I was glad to be wearing shoes, since I knew it would’ve cut up my feet otherwise. Panda was, somehow, biting small pieces off the large pepperoni piece I’d scored.

When I spotted the barely-visible face of the person who’d yelled, *whatever-was-coming* emerged out from the hallway and I leapt head-first into the ball pit. My face immediately kissed a football-sized hollow plastic ball, before I sunk down the pit and hit the bottom, where small hills formed from congregated dust bunnies, rock-sized pebbles, and band-aids the length of blankets were all gathered.

“Yuck,” Panda said, the sight clearly stealing his appetite.

I bit into the pepperoni, and said, “Hardly the worst I’ve seen.”

“Shhh!” whisper-yelled an emaciated-looking man from nearby, though he was hidden by the large plastic balls that separated us.

Though it wasn’t easy with the balls constantly slipping away under my shoes, I managed to climb up to the top of the pit and peek out at the *thing* that had my new acquaintance so spooked.

I couldn’t help but swallow hard when I saw the twelve-foot-tall morbidly-obese clown with a full kit of unsettling makeup; cheaply-made costume with purple, light-blue, and red; a grin that seemed to reach all the way back to his ears, with teeth like hypodermic needles, and a long glistening stream of red drool; as well as open sores covering his purple-gray skin wherever makeup hadn’t been properly applied or the hem of his outfit didn’t cover.

In short: it was a monstrosity of a clown.

As silently as I could manage, I pulled my Looking Glass out and peered at the giant through it.

Level ??	'Bungo the Clown'	Boss ^x
<i>“BUNGO LOVE CHILDREN!”</i>		
<i>Bungo the Clown absolutely loves children, which is a shame for him, because we removed them from your world. Now this big sad clown wanders the halls of his many Playrooms, making sure the toys, food, and playing facilities are protected from rats.</i>		
<i>In case you were wondering, you are a rat. At least in Bungo’s eyes.</i>		
<i>Also, let me give you a hint: it’d be a bad idea to fight Bungo head-on, as he is functionally immortal. Just like how the cast of our beautiful Dungeons are manifold, so too are the requirements for beating them.</i>		
<i>Have fun figuring out how to get out of his Playroom.</i>		

“We’re screwed,” Panda whispered. “You only know how to punch things!”

“Are you calling me stupid?”

“Shhh!” said the guy again.

“You know what? Fuck this. Fuck their rules. I’m killing this ugly-ass clown!”

I began crawling out of the pit, disturbing dozens of the plastic balls, the sound of which immediately drew the giant Clown’s attention away from the table, where he’d been staring at the pizza which Panda and I had helped ourselves to.

“You *psycho*! You’ll get us all killed!”

“A RAT!” came a blaringly-loud dumb-sounding voice from the giant, before the ground started quaking as it began lumbering towards the ball pit with squeaking steps.

I squared my shoulders as I marched forward to meet the towering monstrosity that, quite frankly, scared the shit out of me.

“Gambit, if you wanted to unalive yourself, you should’ve just let the Humanbus catch you.”

“Be quiet, Panda, I need to focus.”

SQUEAK!

SQUEAK!

SQUEAK!

When only eight yards separated us, I broke into a sprint.

“*Unequip All!*” I shouted, violating the moral ethics of the Great Game for the second time in the last hour.

SKILL TRIGGER!

BIRTHDAY_SUIT is now in full effect!

Energy blossomed to life in my legs and I leapt from the awful plastic asphalt and flew high enough into the air that I was face-to-fist with the monstrous clown. Time seemed to slow, as the clown’s large bug-eyed stare struggled to track me, and I pulled my right fist back, preparing for a rain of punches.

“*Punch.harder()*!”

“Do you really have to enunciate the parentheses every time?” Panda commented, just before the attack went out.

ACTIVATING SCRIPT: *Punch.harder()*!

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

My Punch-Glove shot forward as though it’d been fired from a cannon and hit with enough force to... well, it actually didn’t do anything.

REACTIVATING SCRIPT: *Punch.harder()*!

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

My fist shot forward again, the tripling effect of the Punch-Glove already letting itself be known, as the resultant impact produced a sound like a thunderclap. But it wasn’t enough, so my fist pulled back, and, in the same moment, my passive triggered.

ACTIVATING SCRIPT: *Math.multiply(Punch)*!

```
Math.multiply(Punch)
```

This time, the punch sent a jolt of electricity back up my arm when it connected, and produced a shockwave that lifted all the dust from the floor and pushed it away in a ring around us. But even *this* wasn’t enough, so my ability reactivated again.

But this was what I’d been counting on. I had three separate affects multiplying the damage of each other, and, though I wasn’t any mathematician, I had played enough poorly-thought-out games to know that such multiplication was how you utterly trivialized the challenge of a game.

And if I was understanding the logic behind the **Math.multiply(Punch)** ability correctly, it took the first two punches and multiplied them with each other, and, depending on when the tripling effects of the Punch-Glove entered the equation, the result was that every third punch was insanely-powerful. What I didn’t know, however, was whether my **Punch.harder()** ability would then take that third punch and double it, in which case, my sixth punch would perhaps blow a hole through the side of the Dungeon boundary...

When the reactivation happened a fourth time, the punch was even stronger than the third, and a fifth quickly followed behind it, with the first bit of damage becoming visible on the ugly clown’s face. Then came the sixth punch with another activation of the multiply passive and the resultant shockwave sent everything, me included, flying away from the impact site, where a crater had formed in the floor and parts of the ceiling had fallen down.

Even as I tumbled head-over-heels across the playroom floor, scraping my skin off in bits-and-pieces with every new rotation, I knew I had slain the giant clown, because of the way **Punch.harder()** worked. The first time I’d used it against the Psychiatrist, I’d performed nearly twenty punches in what in real-time accounted to less than two seconds, and it seemed like the ability lasted until either I perished or my target did.

I slammed into a seesaw with enough force to dislocate my shoulder, before violently spinning into the air, cracking my head against the ceiling, then falling back down onto a metal slide that was as hot as a stove for some reason.

As my skin began to sizzle, I immediately rolled off the slide and collapsed on my back next to it.

“I did it, Panda!” I exclaimed, the adrenaline high and self-satisfaction of pulling off something the System had told me was impossible making me delirious.

“Erm... Gambit?”

“What?” I asked, unable to wipe the smile off my face.

“Your arm is... how do I put it...”

I lifted my right arm into the air above me. Except. There was no arm. There was barely a stump left. Everything from my elbow joint to my hand was just gone. The tremendous impact had utterly atomized my limb, while also cauterizing the stump in the same go.

“Thank god they have the Full Recovery reward for beating a Dungeon,” I said.

“Well. About that. I don’t think you beat the Dungeon.”

As if to clarify this, an achievement popped up.

Congratulations! You have unlocked an achievement! ^x
<i>‘Soft-Lock’</i> Now look what you did...
<i>The GREAT GAME has been rigorously tested on countless worlds like yours, and we ironed out all the serious bugs many cycles ago, so this really isn’t meant to be possible...</i>
<i>You were supposed to follow after Bungo and sneak into his workshop once he unlocked the door, but, eh, now that he’s dead, there’s no way you’ll be able to do that anymore...</i>
<i>In short. You’re stuck with no way to clear the Dungeon.</i>
<i>I’m sure everyone else stuck in here with you are pretty happy about this new development, especially that one guy in the ball pit who had figured out how to clear it.</i>
Reward: I hope you’re proud of yourself...

“Well... shit.”