

Chapter -13

I repeatedly slammed my right shoulder into the seesaw to put it back into its socket, letting out a pained string of expletives when it finally happened. Afterwards I awkwardly reequipped my suit, sleeveless shirt, socks, underwear, and shoes through the Inventory screen with my left hand, feeling pretty stupid about the reckless behavior that’d cost me an arm.

To really ram it home, an achievement popped up:

Congratulations! You have unlocked an achievement! <small>x</small>
<i>‘One-Armed Bandit’</i> Lost your dominant arm.
<i>Hah.</i>
Reward: <i>‘Left-Handed Scissors’</i>

A pair of violet-colored children’s paper scissors appeared in the air and landed in the palm of my hand, but I immediately threw them away with an annoyed grunt.

“I hate this dumbass System!”

“Careful Gambit, *that guy* is coming over here.”

I turned to look towards the ball pit, which I’d flown past following my killing strike, and saw that a man was storming towards me. He looked to be in his forties and had a receding hairline of brown hair. He wore a bloodied blue-and-yellow Hawaii shirt and khaki shorts, and there were a few ugly sewing patterns on his exposed legs and arms.

“Hey pal! What the devil d’ya just do!?”

“I killed the boss...”

“And how did that pan out for ya? Huh!?”

“He seems angry,” Panda remarked.

“Yeah, no shit.”

“What’d’ya just say to me!?”

“Relax, alright.”

“Relax!? You’re telling me to fudging relax when I’ve been trapped in this godforsaken s-hole of a place!? I finally found out how we were meant to escape, but then you went and screwed it all up!!”

“It’s somehow more intimidating when he’s trying not to swear,” Panda remarked.

“You must be the one the achievement mentioned,” I realized.

“Oh, I got one too! Lemme tell ya what it says! It’s titled ‘Stolen Glory’ and reads as follows: *You were on the right path to getting everyone out of here. You would’ve been the Hero of Castleburg! But the crazy and evil Gambit, who just broke out of the Asylum, has come to sow chaos and ruined your masterfully-laid plan!*”

“Is the System seriously trying to pit us Players against each other...?” I groaned, looking to Panda.

“You’d better look at me when I’m talking to you!” said the angry man and suddenly punched me in the mouth. Even though there was a clear Strength difference between us, it still wasn’t pleasant.

“Ow. Don’t do that.”

“Or what, guy? You think you’re tough because you can kill a big clown!?”

“Gambit, you shouldn’t hit him, you’ll vaporize his body.”

I looked the angry Hawaiian Shirt guy in his eyes and said, with as much sincerity as I could, “I’ll find a way to get us out of here.”

“Oh, you wanna play the Hero, huh, buddy!?”

“Listen here, I’m neither your Pal, Guy, or Buddy. If you don’t back the fuck up, I will reduce you to a crumbled sack of bone flour.”

“...Was that an attempt to threaten him?” Panda asked. “Because it wasn’t very scary.”

I was about to answer him when suddenly a pain blossomed to life in my stomach. I looked down and saw that Hawaiian Shirt had stabbed me with a screwdriver in my abdomen.

“You fucking asked for this,” I told him, gritting my teeth as I pulled my arm back and sent a punch right into the side of his jaw.

Except...

I had attempted to do it with my non-existent right arm.

Hawaiian Shirt looked at me, then laughed mockingly.

I pulled my head back, then slammed it into his, our foreheads meeting in a loud *smack* that immediately knocked the guy out cold and scrambled my thoughts.

“You might’ve killed him,” Panda muttered, assessing the unconscious guy from my shoulder.

“Wasn’t as pleasant as when I used my forehead against the Newt,” I commented. “He’ll probably just get a concussion, which the System will fix when I find a way out.”

“I feel like relying on the mercy of the System is exactly what got you in this bind you’re in now. Please show some restraint, Gambit.”

“I didn’t even put my strength into it. He must’ve been really weak,” I said.

I reached down and pulled the screwdriver out of my abdomen, releasing a grunt of pain as it left my body, before opening my inventory and bringing out the Sewing Kit. The Screwdriver disappeared into my storage and was replaced with the box.

There was just one problem now, or, well, two: I was right-handed; and I didn’t know how to sew.

“Panda, would you mind sewing me up?”

“Can’t, no opposable thumbs.”

I sighed. “Guess I’d better hurry up and find out how to leave then.”

“You could ask *that girl* over there,” he said and pointed towards a young woman who had crawled out of a series of tubes she’d been hiding in. It was kind of like one of those contraptions that children would enter and get lost in at the playground of a fast-food restaurant.

The young woman had a round face, black shoulder-length hair, and her figure was hidden beneath an XL dark-grey hoodie with the print of a neon-yellow smiley on the front. She looked around worried, before noticing me and the unconscious body I stood next to. As our eyes met, she froze in place.

“Hey you!” I called to her.

She did the are-you-talking-to-me gesture and I waved her over with my stumped arm, which only seemed to worsen her expression into one of abject terror.

I began walking towards her, before yelling across the room, “Do you know how to sew???”

As my words were slowly absorbed into her mind, she seemed to visibly ease-up, then began carefully approaching me. We met by a unicorn-shaped rocking chair on a spring.

“Do you want me to sew your wound?” she asked. Her voice was very timid, but her large eyes seemed kind of crazed. Probably she had seen some horrific things.

“Did you kill the clown?” she continued.

“I did. I thought that was how I’d clear the Dungeon.”

“It’s not so bad in here,” she commented. “I like the pineapple pizza and all the water fountains have various sodas in them. I found one in a different room that had Mt. Dew.”

“Do you know where the Clown’s Workshop is?”

“I’d like to hear about this fountain,” Panda commented.

“I can show you,” she replied, then looked at the box in my hand. “What happens if you manage to get the Workshop open? Are we all going to be thrown out from here? I heard that’s what happened to someone else and his group when they completed the Library maze.”

“Sounds like she doesn’t want to leave,” Panda commented.

The girl nodded. “It’s scary outside, I’d rather stay here.”

I blinked, realization taking a second to kick in.

“Can you see *this guy*?” I asked, indicating Panda who was seated on my shoulder.

She nodded. “Am I not supposed to? He’s very cute, although I never imagined he’d have a voice *like that*.”

“What’s your name?” I asked her.

“Bee, like the... well, like a bee.”

“Like the bug that stings you and dies?”

“They don’t necessarily die from stinging you, at least not all types of bees.

“Blowing my mind here, Bee,” Panda commented. I was pretty sure he was just flattering her because he knew she could see and hear him.

I sat down on the unicorn rocking chair and started undoing the bottom-most buttons of my suit jacket, before repeating the steps with my sleeveless shirt. I showed her my abdomen and handed her the Sewing Kit box.

“I already have one,” she said, declining it.

“Just take it, I can’t sew anyway.”

“What if you get hurt again?” she asked.

“I’ll figure something out.”

“Bee, listen to this. This is his second time losing his right arm. He’s operating on luck and nothing else at this point. I’d offer to sew him up, but, as you can tell, I have no thumbs.”

The girl nodded, “You do need thumbs for this.”

She opened the Sewing Kit and pulled out a needle which she fitted with a thread, then began carefully sewing tightly around my stab wound.

“I need to ask an uncomfortable question, Bee.”

“...What?” she asked, her hands freezing in place.

“In your *Status* menu, what does the red bar at the top look like?” As the words left my mouth, the screen appeared, but I clicked it away immediately.

“Status?” she asked, then pulled her head back in surprise. “What’s this?? I can’t make it go away!”

“There’s a little X in the corner,” Panda told her.

She reached out and pressed the air, before repeating the command, “Status.”

“The bar at the top is three-quarters full. It looks almost like it’s a horizontal tube of blood.”

Three-quarters... so she’s borderline insane and that’s why she can see Panda. I doubt she is immune to the 100% insanity transformation like me.

“I just got an Achievement,” she said, surprised.

“What does it say?” I asked.

“You can’t see it?”

“Nope.”

“It’s called ‘*Oh God the Voices, Make Them Stop!*’ and says that I’m three-quarters towards insanity. It gave me a reward called ‘*Inanimate Voices*’.”

“That must be why you can see and hear Panda,” I remarked.

“Other people can’t?”

“No. To their eyes he isn’t even there.”

“Do you have it too? The Inanimate Voices?”

I nodded. “I’m maxed out on my Insanity Gauge.”

“Isn’t that supposed to turn you into a monster?”

“Apparently, I’m glitched. Even my Class is called ‘System Glitch’.”

“I didn’t get a Class, I think,” Bee replied.

“It doesn’t say anything in the top-right corner of your Status screen?”

“It says ‘N/A’.”

“What does the rest of your screen look like?”

“Some words and numbers? I have three in all my Attributes except Dexterity, which is four, and Intelligence and Wisdom which are both six.”

“That seems pretty good,” I guessed, having no idea how my Attributes actually translated into quantifiable numbers. “What level are you?”

“Zero,” she replied.

“Let’s see if we can’t get you some levels then, it’ll help you survive.”

She finished sewing me up and the moment she snipped the thread with a scissor from the Kit, the wound healed itself closed, which was an uncomfortable feeling, but not as bad as when Annabella had done it.

“Thanks for that, now come on,” I said, standing up and giving her my left hand.

Bee took it cautiously and then—

Congratulations! You have unlocked an achievement! ^x
<i>‘Good Samaritan or Sketchy Lecher?’</i>
Found a Wayward Minor.
<i>Almost as rare as Glitched Players are Wayward Minors.</i>
<i>As a matter of course, all Minors of any world participating in the GREAT GAME are moved to our Children’s Zone, where they can peacefully wait out their time until they mature into adults.</i>
<i>However, the System isn’t perfect, so sometimes a Minor slips through the cracks and is left behind. Whether you are a Good Samaritan who wish to help this lost child to safety or an Amoral Pervert, it would be in your best interest to contact Child Protective Services. They will find every Wayward Minor sooner-or-later, and those found to be preventing them from reaching the safety of our Children’s Zone will be crucified on live broadcast during our Game Events.</i>
<i>If you go the route of the Good Samaritan, you will be rewarded.</i>
Reward: ‘ <i>Child Protective Services Flare</i> ’