

## Chapter -87

“You idiot!” Panda scolded me, as Bee and I appeared in an empty room with four clean beds that each had a privacy curtain.

The Moth Magician got off my back and started looking around, while I went over to the window opposite the door. Outside was darkness.

I slammed my purple gauntlet into the window. It crumbled apart to reveal that the ‘darkness’ was in fact just a flat painting glued onto the other side of the window. There was nothing beyond it than the screaming tapestry of faces.

“What is *that*??” Bee asked excitedly. “There are so many patterns here!”

She began staring intently at the faces, which looked as though they were woven from old people’s hair and continually let off a cacophony of static screams.

“It’s the Dungeon Barrier,” I told her.

“Don’t touch it!” Panda said hurriedly.

It was a good thing too, because she’d been reaching out towards it.

An achievement suddenly arrived:

**Congratulations! You have unlocked an achievement!** ✕

*‘Brawn won’t save you’*

**Entered a Challenge Dungeon for the first time.**

*Well, well, well. It seems you have stumbled into one of our rare Challenge Dungeons. At last the little Glitch won’t be able to punch his way out of this one!*

*Challenge Dungeons vary in theme and function, but we can reveal that this one has a complex series of puzzles that require solving in order to reach the exit. All the while, the Surgeon and his patients will do everything to stop you.*

*Should you fail to reach the exit within the next 20 minutes,  
the Dungeon will collapse and you will die.*

**Reward:** ‘Game Coin’

“Ooh, a puzzle!” Bee said, having received the same pop-up no doubt.

“I knew you should’ve inspected the Dungeon before entering!”

“I don’t care,” I told him. “This changes nothing.”

“What are you talking about?”

“*This.*”

I raised my purple gauntlet at the screaming tapestry and flipped it off.

“*Dungeon-Break.*”

### ACTIVATING DUNGEON MAP

Total Player number: 6

Nearest Player: 32 yards

Total Enemy number: 40

Nearest Enemy: 15 yards

Nearest Boss: 67 yards

Nearest Exit: 298 yards

The map that appeared was like a blueprint of the entire dungeon and displayed the hospital wing in three dimensions, making it obvious there was more than one floor to the place. A big dot on the floor above us seemed to indicate the Boss’ location, and forty other dots spread throughout the nine floors showed the locations of smaller enemies. Golden-yellow dots indicated the Players, Bee included, but I was marked with a green one.

I quickly scanned the various Player markers and saw that Logan was two floors below at the end of a hallway. As I watched him for a moment, one of the red dots moving towards him blinked out. There was another Player on his floor as well, but he was still in one of the rooms.

“That rat bastard is camping!” I remarked disapprovingly.

The exit was on the bottom-most floor, through a tunnel that, based on the marker in front of it, was sealed off somehow. Six small blue dots throughout seemed to indicate caches or perhaps clues.

None of them were on this floor, but two were on the one above, where the Boss was moving around. The other four caches were spread out on the seven floors below at random.

“Are you going to eject everyone again?” Panda asked.

“No.”

I clicked the ‘*Delete Dungeon Barrier*’ button and immediately received a pop-up for confirmation:

<b>Ability Confirmation Required</b>
<p><i>You are about to utilize your <b>Dungeon-Break</b> ability to remove the Dungeon Barrier of <b>The Hospital Rooms (East Wing)</b>.</i></p> <p><i>Removing the Dungeon Barrier will compromise the integrity of the Dungeon and can have devastating and unintended consequences for all Players and Enemies within. It also removes the protections against outside influence by <b>Voidspawn</b>.</i></p> <p><i>The moment you accept, the Barrier will be removed.</i></p> <p><i>Are you certain you wish to proceed?</i></p>
<p><b>YES</b> — <b>NO</b></p>

“Wait, the Barrier protects against Voidspawn?” Panda said, confused. “Maybe you shouldn’t do it then.”

“Why, what are they?” Bee immediately asked before I had the chance.

“Eh, how can I explain this... They’re like a cosmic phenomenon with little rhyme or reason. You know how a flame creates heat and smoke? Rituals have similar byproducts, except they’re sentient.”

“Sentient smoke?” I asked.

“No, dumbass. Like writhing masses of incoherence and chaos that are attracted to sources of energy. Dungeons are basically miniature realms. Do you even fathom how much energy it takes to

create such a thing?? Anyway, yeah, if the Barrier goes down, it sounds like those things would quickly begin seeping into the Dungeon...”

“Wouldn’t a better description be ‘like moths to a flame’?”

“No. That undersells their danger. Listen! Even Demons don’t mess with Voidspawn. That should tell you all you need to know!”

I shrugged. “Let chaos rule.”

Then I clicked ‘Yes’.

“You’re an actual fu—!”

A reverberating *snap* moved through the entire dungeon and made my heart skip a beat. A sense of pressure also immediately started building around my body, as though the air was turning hostile.

“Ah!” Bee exclaimed and I quickly turned to look at her.

“The pattern disappeared! I hadn’t finished solving it...”

I looked through the hole in the wall where the window had been. The screaming tapestry was gone, and now it was like staring into some messed-up version of outer space. Beyond our room was a beige backdrop full of stars and celestial bodies large enough to see minor details of, like their colors and surrounding asteroid belts. One of the planets closest to us looked like Saturn, except it had a massive unblinking eye in its middle, which stared towards us.

Swallowing hard, I gritted my teeth and forced on a grin. Then I grabbed Bee by the wrist.

“Let’s go.”

I punched the wall a few more times to make the hole big enough for us to pass through, then leapt out.

Although I fully expected to immediately go into freefall, I instead felt a tug of gravity keeping me leashed to the dungeon. Instead of air or a vacuum, it was like swimming in goop. Cosmic goop.

I didn’t waste a moment and began swimming towards the hallway two floors below where we’d arrived, retaining the mental image of Logan’s location. I let go of Bee and she used her wings to propel herself forward alongside me.

“He won’t see this one coming,” I said with a grin.

“You might wanna hurry it up,” Panda advised, before pointing towards the not-Saturn planet with the enormous eye.

I glanced back over my shoulder and immediately regretted it, as I realized the planet was moving closer.

“Okay, that’s pretty fucked,” I muttered in disbelief.

“You thought I was lying, didn’t you!?” Panda scolded me.

“You could’ve said, ‘Oh, by the way, a planet will start chasing you’.”

“That’s not a planet,” he replied.

Bee was pulling out in front of me, so I made a snap decision.

“Bee! You’ve gotta head for the exit! I’ll deal with Logan and join you as soon as he’s 100% dead!”

“No way!” she shouted back, already next to the wall of the sixth floor where Logan would be hiding. Her wings really gave her an advantage in speed, even though we were moving through cosmic goop.

“Don’t be an idiot like me!” I told her. “Go to the bottom-most room and wait for me at least!”

“Making a strong argument here,” Panda said.

“Shut up and help me convince her!”

“You should listen to Gambit,” Panda advised Bee.

“Fine! But I’m not leaving without you!”

She immediately began swimming down alongside the hospital wing that floated in outer space, just as I arrived next to the wall of the sixth-floor hallway myself.

“I think you made the right call,” Panda praised me.

“*Meow*,” added Lordie.

“Her Vitality is too low for dealing with Logan,” I said. “Also, do you think that not-planet will just keep moving towards us until it smashes into the dungeon?”

“Definitely, yep.”

“...Cool. I should hurry up then.”

“No, no, take your time!”

“Was that sarcasm?”

“Get a move on!” he yelled.

I crawled along the outside of the sixth-floor hallway until I reached the place where Logan had been hiding. Using my index finger, I carefully poked a hole in the wall, which was no more than a couple inches thick. After sticking my eye up against the hole, I saw that Logan was hugging the wall opposite me, while using a little white-painted cabinet on wheels as both cover and a rest for his long rifle-arm.

Before he could reposition, I swam around the other side of the hallway, having to navigate around the rooms that blocked my way. It felt like I was on a spacewalk on the ISS, and quickly my mind started to imagine what’d happened to those astronauts stationed there.

“Focus,” Panda said.

I got to the right place, then prepared to strike.