

56 — Surprise Inspection 3: Electric Jubilee?

I looked up at the title of this chapter and squinted suspiciously.

“Hey Imu, haven’t we only had one surprise inspection before?”

The chubby dark-skinned boy looked up as well.

“Maybe we missed the last one? Or maybe the department in charge of naming chapters messed something up.”

“It’s not much of a surprise if we know it’s coming though,” I remarked.

A thunderous explosion broke the air between us and sent Imu flying away with a loud squeal, while my durable vessel remained unphased.

As the lilac and sulphur-scented smoke settled, a small albino Imp was revealed. He looked around with hooded eyes, then pulled a pair of black-lensed goggles out of thin air and put them on to hide his red-rimmed bloodshot eyes. The pale Imp reached up and pulled a dainty glitter-and-rhinestone-covered pink brush-wand from where it rested on top of his left bat-wing-looking ear, after which he thumbed the septum piercing in his bulbous nose as though for good luck, before starting to spin and dance while waving the fancy brush-wand around.

From around the albino Imp emerged six golems of dirt, metal, stone, and tufts of grass, which looked like humanoid bunnies, for some reason. I used my limited Appraisal on one of the golems and received the following reply:

Name: *Hubrik’s Golem-Guard*

Occupation: *Bodyguard*

Species: *Earth Golem*

Level: *25/25*

Alignment: *Subservient-although-not-entirely-happy-about-it*

Faction: *System Support Ltd.*

I then inspected the Imp himself and received a response similar to when I tried to Appraise Imu and Bel:

Name: *Hubrik*

Occupation: *Aberrant Systems Department: Problem-Solver*

Species: *Support Imp*

Level: *????*

Alignment: *All-business*

Faction: *System Support Ltd.*

“Aight, what’s this all ‘bout then?”

“Hello! I’m Toad! I haven’t seen you before.”

The albino Imp looked at my vessel suspiciously. “First frog-looking core I’ve seen.”

“I’m a toad, not a frog! You specist scum!”

“I’m here to inspect your system. I heard Yonn gave it a vessel. From the logs, it seems to have been a bad idea, given that she allied herself with some minions that were cosplaying the literal incarnation of our version of Hitler, as well as *The Unspeakable Unmentionable God of Excruciating Death (but only for Imps) Bacellor.*”

“She didn’t mean anything by it! Also, where’s Yonn?”

“Yonn and his nephew are still dealing with the trauma from their last visit and have been granted a vacation to one of the paradise realms.”

“Oh…”

Hubrik waved his fancy wand around to summon a series of scrolling text that hovered in the air in front of him and glowed ominously green. As he scanned the information it offered, he hummed and hawed, grunted and gawed, snorted and snawed, and many other very critical and foreboding sounds in their various forms of conjugation.

Despite the fact that I towered over the Support Imp, he had a very awe-inspiring and menacing aura that made me fear for the sort of punishment he would dish out to our System, and, by extension, me.

“Impus Krimpus,” he profaned, “Why is your Lord able to overwrite your evolution goals!?”

I tried to shrug, but as stated in chapter forty-five, I was unable to perform the gesture, and, to make matters worse, the spontaneous-and-bizarre motions that ensued put the Imp’s bodyguard golems on high alert and they quickly formed a barrier between me and him.

“Stand down,” Hubrik muttered to his golems and they returned to their original state a moment later.

“Alright ‘Toad’, frankly, this System is a total mess. Normally we just wipe the personality matrix and it goes away, but it seems like the stressors caused by your unorthodox evolution path and core type will make the problem reoccur ad nauseam, putting us in an endless cycle that will lead to an eventual meltdown that stunts your potential growth as a core.”

“Please don’t wipe her memory!” I pleaded, “System is doing way better now that she can take her aggressions out on the real world.”

“You’re not listening... I’m telling you *that* won’t work anyway.”

“Oh... then what do you plan to do?”

“Well, first, I’d like to actually see this System.”

As though summoned by his very utterance, Imu appeared with System, holding her hand like a child walking to the park with their parent: a strangely-featureless sentient doll parent.

“*Congratulations! My hatred of Impkind can finally be given a release!*” she said, then lunged for Hubrik with her doll-hands splayed and extended like claws.

“Guard me!” he ordered his golems and they dutifully got in front of him, only to be shorn apart by her destructive hands.

She punched, clawed, and kicked the golems into a thousand chunks, while cackling manically, but Hubrik quickly summoned more of them to try and overwhelm her. For a few moments, it seemed as though his summoning power was equal to her God Entity body, as the golems were able to push her back while sacrificing their lives to protect their summoners, but then she picked up speed and with a single punch turned eight golems in front of her to literal dust particles with just the pressurised wind it caused.

“Unholy shit,” Imu said and gaped in horror at the scene before us.

“System! Stop! This is definitely not helping to convince him that he shouldn’t wipe your memory!”

Hubrik vanished in a puff of smoke, reappearing atop the roof of a nearby building, where he began summoning golems of fire, wind, and water as well, but which all met the same fate as the previous ones, thanks to System’s destructive martial skills.

She leapt from the ground to the rooftop, forcing Hubrik to teleport away again. Surprisingly, he reappeared just behind my body, perhaps hoping that I could shelter him.

“Oh god, make it stop!”

“Why don’t you just teleport away from here?” Imu asked the Imp, while System stood atop the rooftop, scanning the area for the imp. It would be just moments before she spotted him where he cowered behind me...

“I can’t! My manager will reprimand me if I flee!”

“System! Calm down!” I yelled and the sound of my voice caused her to turn my way, spotting the Imp.

“You idiot!” he complained.

Time seemed to slow as System launched from the rooftop and somersaulted into a diving kick aimed at the Support Imp’s head, but then an enormous glob of snot flew from somewhere nearby and collided with her mid-dive, sending her plummeting straight down to the ground, where the snot seemed to seep around her body and imprison her in a gelatinous prison.

One of the bizarre Slugmen slithered over, producing a series of farts and burps from its mouth-hole, which the nearby swimsuit-clad translator translated into, “Now, now, we should not be fighting each other.”

Then the Slugman noticed the albino Imp behind me, and a predatory aura seemed to overcome him, as a hideously-long tongue emerged from the circular mouth to slather its head with goop.

A series of pitched burps were translated into, “Is that a delectable Imp you’re hiding there?”

“Impus Krimpus! You have Slugmen here too!? They’re the natural predators of Imps in the wild!”

The Slugman slithered closer to us, and this time, when Hubrik vanished in a puff of smoke, he did not reappear anywhere nearby. He had left for good this time.

“Sooner or later these Support Imps will wage war on us,” Imu said forebodingly.

“They sound like a very persecuted people,” I remarked.

“They’re supposed to be delicious,” he replied.

“Ah, then it makes sense.”