

## Chapter -17

“I only have enough Mana for two shots!” Bee announced as I brushed past Pink Jogging-Set Lady.

I swung wildly to try and catch Jack-In-the-Box with a body-blow, but he nimbly ducked under my arm, then spun like a blender blade and sliced shallowly through my left forearm and barely missing my legs.

Moving to quickly prevent him from stabbing me with a follow-up move, I positioned myself to his left side and he turned to follow me. No sooner had he turned away from the direction Bee and the fleeing woman were than a buzzing Beetle Bolt tore into his armpit and emerged out the left side of his neck. The projectile flew on for a few more yards before losing its energy, spinning and scattering gore all the while.

“Nice shot!” I called, hopping forward with my knee aimed at Jack’s stomach. But he was too quick for me to catch him up-close, and as he dodged out of the way he took the front of my right foot with him, ruining the tip of my shoe and severing at least one of my toes.

I winced in pain, and when I stepped down and tried to back away, the lack of my big toe was immediately obvious, as my balance was suddenly off-kilter. The System, ever annoying and interfering as it was, popped an achievement right in my face.

<b>Congratulations! You have unlocked an achievement! <sup>x</sup></b>
<i>‘This Little Piggy Went to the Industrial Grinder’</i>
<b>Lost one of your big toes.</b>
<i>This may seem just a slight inconvenience in the grand scheme of things, but you’ll quickly realize just how debilitating an injury this is when you start trying to run or maintain balance.</i>
<b>Reward: ‘Fingerless Socks’</b>

“What’s a Fingerless Sock,” Panda wondered, hanging on to my shoulder as I avoided nearly being disemboweled thanks to the distraction.

Forced to look through the semi-transparent pop-up message, I managed to avoid two more slashes, before misjudging my timing and having both of Jack-In-the-Box’s blade-hands rammed into my abdomen.

All the air was punched out of my lungs and a metallic cold quickly washed through my lower body. Fortunately, if such a word could be used in this situation, he wasn’t able to immediately retract his blades, thanks to me grabbing his throat in a vice grip.

A buzzing sound warned me that another Beetle Bolt was on its way and this one struck the boss right in his temple, but broke against the strength of his cranium.

I gritted my teeth as I felt the cold radiate up to my lungs and acrid fluid attempting to escape my esophagus, then prepared to headbutt Jack’s tough noggin with my own, though I could feel how consciousness was beginning to elude me, as darkness flowed into the corners of my vision.

With a cough, bile and blood emerged from my mouth, and I could feel in my gut how he was twisting his blades to try and wriggle free.

Suddenly an angry and desperate yell came from nearby. I turned just in time to see Pink Jogging-Set Lady come running with a crowbar in her hands. With a grunt of effort and a string of nonsensical curses, which might’ve been Russian unless my ears were deceiving me, the lady smashed the crowbar into the right side of the boss’ face. The same place where Bee had hit with her last shot.

A satisfying *crunch* came from the impact and I was pulled to the floor with Jack-In-the-Box as he was knocked out cold. I slowly slid off of his blade-hands, while the woman kept smashing him in the head with the crowbar, screaming and crying all the while. Each impact became less *crunch* and more *splat* with every repetition, until eventually she tossed the bloodied and sticky crowbar aside.

With a loud preemptive gargle, she spat on the boss’ dead body, then looked at me, said something I didn’t understand and began moving towards the box, walking past the dead man in the suit and the fat person who’d been chopped up.

My vision was slowly fading as more of my blood leaked out onto the wooden floor of the workshop, but I felt the sensation when small hands grabbed my shoulders and began dragging me away.

I blinked myself awake, suddenly outside again, the sun’s light staining the distant sky.

With a gasp I shot upright, seeing Bee talking with Panda nearby, and the Crowbar Lady hugging her knees a bit further away. We’d been dumped out into the sandy playground next to the

kindergarten and all my wounds were healed. However, it seemed that my Punch-Glove had been disintegrated permanently as it had not returned. I couldn’t tell if it was meant to happen or if it was some sort of hotfix to prevent me from easily killing any other ‘functionally immortal’ bosses in the future.

“You’re awake,” Panda remarked, looking at me, not too concerned.

“No thanks to you,” I replied.

“I’m the Mascot, remember?”

Instead of answering, I pulled my Looking Glass out of my inventory and looked at the Crowbar Lady through it. I wanted to remember the name of the person who had saved me, especially when I had initially written them off.

*I was perhaps a bit too quick to judge...*

Level 2	'Tammy-Lee'	Player <sup>x</sup>
<p><i>“Получай сука!!! Блять, ебанная мразь! Получай! Сдохни! Сдохни! Сдохни!”</i></p> <p><i>Class: <b>Mechanic</b></i></p> <p><i>Main Attribute(s): <b>Strength, Vitality, &amp; Perception</b></i></p> <p><i>Prior to the apocalypse, Tammy-Lee made a hobby of tuning scooters and cars. She is the byproduct of white-trash-meets-Russia, and, though she speaks English fluently, she prefers Russian. She has recently undergone a realization that perhaps she <b>is</b> cut out for the apocalypse after all, and all it took was smashing in the head of a boss that killed her friends.</i></p> <p><i>She seems indifferent towards you.</i></p>		

As though reminded by the pop-up, several other ones appeared from defeating the Dungeon.

### **DUNGEON ‘Bungo’s Playroom’ CLEARED!**

**Recommended Player level: 10**

**Recommended Team size: 3**

**Average Player level: -1**

**Player survivors: 4**

**Player deaths: 8**

**Enemies slain: 11**

**Bosses slain: 2**

<b>Congratulations! You have unlocked an achievement!</b> <sup>x</sup>	
<i>‘Bungo’s Playroom First Clear’</i>	
<b>Cleared Bungo’s Playroom for the first time.</b>	
<i>We are obligated to give these achievements for any first-time clears of a Dungeon, though I’d rather not reward someone who subverted the intended design of the challenge!</i>	
<i>But... company policy... what can you do?</i>	
<b>Rewards:</b> Full Recovery & ‘Party Hat’	

<b>Congratulations! You have leveled up!</b> <sup>x</sup>	
<b>You have reached Level -6!</b>	
+1 new Attribute Point available to invest!	
<i>Kills required for Level -7</i>	<i>4/20</i>

<b>Congratulations! You have unlocked an achievement!</b> <sup>x</sup>	
<i>‘Optional Schmoptimal’</i>	
<b>Killed an Optional Boss.</b>	
<i>Do you even understand what ‘optional’ means? Probably not, but whatever.</i>	
<i>You killed Jack-In-the-Box, so your reward is thematic to his character. Do note that not all <b>Optional Bosses</b> will have rewards associated with them, as they are, you know, optional...</i>	
<b>Reward:</b> ‘One of Jack’s Missing Fingers’	

<b>Congratulations! You have unlocked an achievement!</b> <sup>x</sup>
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<p><i>‘Widdle Twired Bwaby’</i></p> <p><b>Had to be carried out of a Dungeon.</b></p>
<p><i>I bet after aaaall that hard work, you just wanna take a nap while your friends continue to do all the heavy lifting, right?</i></p> <p><i>You disgust me.</i></p>
<p><b>Reward:</b> <i>‘Pacifier’</i></p>

I went through each of the achievements, growing more-and-more annoyed as I read them.

“It’s a good thing the Full Recovery applied while you were out cold,” Panda remarked.

“Otherwise, you’d have bled to death.”

“You don’t seem terribly distressed about that possibility.”

“Well, I have Bee now, so it’s fine if you die.”

“Panda, that’s not nice,” Bee commented.

“Did you carry me out?” I asked her, ignoring the dumb remark. “I got a really mean achievement for it.”

“I dragged you to the hole that Tammy opened.”

“You know her?” I asked, indicating the woman sitting next to a half-finished sandcastle, still hugging her legs.

“Only a little bit, from before you entered the Dungeon, when we were trying to stay alive together.”

“Speaking of, it said there were four survivors. Does that mean that Hawaiian Shirt made it out?”

“If he did, I haven’t seen him. Maybe he is still inside?”

“I guess it’s because it’s a different type of Dungeon,” I replied.

“What do you mean?”

“Well, the other two I cleared teleported me out after I killed the boss, but it seems like everyone in the Playrooms had to actually get to the exit in the Workshop. Perhaps it’s to counter-balance the fact that it’s technically possible without doing any fighting.”

“Nevermind that right now!” Panda interrupted. “Your damn beacon is still active!”

I looked up in the sky, seeing how the pillar of light still made my location obvious from miles away.

“Well, shit.”

“Do you hear that?” Bee then asked. “It sounds like buzzing.”

“Crap. We need to get out of here,” I told her, getting to my feet.