

Chapter -61

The sensation of walking through the dark barrier to the boss room was a bit like dipping my head underwater for a moment, as my hearing became muffled and a faint pressure was exuded across my skin.

Coming out on the other side, the sight of an indoor shooting range greeted me. It was essentially just a large indoor hall shaped like a rectangular box. Where the partitioning wall separating shooters from their targets ought to have been, were now just low walls of piled office furniture, with several more further down the length of the hall.

Many of these walls were full of holes from something that both froze and melted whatever it hit, and it was clear that the source was the boss down at the far end, which was currently trying to kill Samantha. She was stuck hopping from wall-to-wall, not quite able to close the open space to the boss it seemed. The everchanging weapon in her hands was currently a shield and I got the feeling that she didn't have much in terms of ranged attacks, which this fight seemed to encourage with its layout.

“Bee, give me an appraisal on the boss.”

I had a bad feeling, given the setup of the fight. When I saw the screen she sent my way, I frowned, feeling snubbed.

Level 15	'The Instructor'	Boss ^x
<i>“I'll whip you pitiful maggots into shape!”</i>		
<i>Once a former Army Drill Sergeant, this hard-assed man ended up as the Firearms Instructor at the Castleburg Police Department, where he terrified many young cops and instilled in them an unshakable self-doubt and feeling of impotence. In surveys of all the cops who quit the Department, this man was cited 68% of the time.</i>		
<i>He often enjoyed using his old M1 Garand for target practice, even though the shooting range wasn't the best place for it. Luckily for him, when he was transformed, his favored weapon was fused directly with his body. Be careful, because he's quite the shot with it!</i>		

Like the rest of the police force, his mind, and head, has been opened to a greater cosmic truth and he wields this power more deftly than anyone else.

“This isn’t the Police Chief,” I said, displeased.

A loud *plink* echoed through the hall.

“Duck!” Panda yelled. I fell to the floor, dragging Bee with me, just as a swirling cannon-ball sized projectile flew through the space we’d occupied a second prior. It continued down into the wall behind us, where it exploded outward in a bright blue-green light and left a circular hole in the wall, through which the screaming tapestry of the Dungeon Boundary could be seen.

“Focus!” the plushie scolded me.

I pushed up off the floor, which was awkward with just half a right arm.

“Bee, do you think you can hit it from back here?” I asked her.

“I’ll try.”

“Good. For starters, make me one of those grenades you can create.”

“A Beetle Bomb, you mean?”

“Yea, one of them.”

She put her hands together and a ball started to form as flechettes came out the holes in her palms and fused together. “How big do you need it?”

“Just the smallest you can do.”

She finished and handed it to me. “You have 5 seconds before it blows up.”

“Got it.”

I scooted to the side a bit, looking straight down at the boss in the distance through a large hole in the furniture wall in front of us, then, with an exaggerated gesture, I pulled my left hand back and flung the ball at the boss with as much oomph as I could manage.

A loud *woosh* came from the projectile as it shot down the length of the range.

“*Whatta ripsnorter!*” Brock cheered.

The Instructor took the ball to the front of its body, where it blew up with a loud *snap* followed by the buzzing sounds of dozens of corkscrew flechettes shooting everywhere. It seemed to have done a decent amount of damage, with the boss’ skin shredded where it’d struck.

At the sound, Samantha jumped violently in surprise. She turned around and spotted us.

“You scared the crap out of me! A warning next time!”

“Kind of thought you would’ve beaten this guy by now. Why are you hiding?”

“Screw you! I’m not the one who vanished!”

“As if we had a say in it!” I yelled back.

Plink.

Samantha, Bee, and I all scrambled for new cover as a projectile shot across the hall, melting and freezing the Reluctant Protagonist’s former hiding spot. It was clear that we were running low on walls already, as Samantha had wasted too much time hiding.

I noticed that half of her left hand was missing, with the rest charred and frostbitten. A part of her thigh was also gouged out and frozen over, plus some of her hair was singed, and her impeccable suit was ruined with several black spots all over it. Not all the damage was consistent with the Fiends’ attacks, nor with the cannon-ball-shooting boss.

“Does the boss have other attacks than the rifle!?” I asked her.

“A big fuck-off sword if you get too close!”

A plan came to my mind and I couldn’t help but cackle a little.

“Sam, turn your weapon into something with range and give me some backup! You too, Bee.”

“Don’t charge it! It’s suicide! Also, don’t call me Sam!”

She turned back to look at me, then asked. “Wait, why’s your right arm like *that*?”

“Alright, go!” I yelled, running towards the boss.

Bee immediately launched a Beetle Bolt at the Instructor, the buzzing projectile shooting past me.

“*Unequip All!*”

SKILL TRIGGER!

BIRTHDAY_SUIT is now in full effect!

I_CAN_FLY is now available!

YOU KNOW HOW TO PLEASE YOUR MISSTRESS. GOOD BOY.

I hopped over a wall, going high enough to graze the ceiling with my hair. From my high vantage I could fully appreciate what the Instructor had turned into.

At the far end of the shooting range was a mound of grey flesh and skin, the human equivalent of a candle that’d burnt all the way down and formed a pile of melted wax. This mound had one very long left arm with two elbows and seven fingers, and a thick right arm with a huge brown-and-black barrel at the end that was more pirate ship cannon than Garand rifle. His torso and head were part of

the mound and fused together, but the top of the head was open. The skin flapped around as a beacon of bright swirling blue-green energy shone out from inside where his brain should’ve been.

I landed next to Samantha, who looked at me with her mouth wide agape. The shield in her right hand had transformed into a bow. I wondered if it was confined to only medieval-fantasy shapes, since a bazooka like what she’d used in the event would’ve been better here.

With a wink, I kicked off and shot across the floor, vaulting a wall, before tossing myself sideways, when the Instructor levelled the cannon in my direction. The weapon released a blast that tore a deep steaming gouge into the concrete floor.

I reoriented myself and resumed charging for the mound of flesh, as an arrow whistled overhead, embedding itself in the side of the cannon arm, but seemingly doing no damage. A moment later came another Beetle Bolt, but it achieved similarly underwhelming results. It was hard to tell if it was because the boss had a weak spot we needed to hit or because it was highly-resistant to ranged attacks. Although, the bomb had done a decent amount of surface-level damage, so it was probably the latter.

“I think it’s resistant to projectiles,” said Panda, who was clinging to my shoulder. I had no idea how long he’d been there. “By the way, I can’t believe you winked at Samantha while looking like this.”

“I’m focusing,” I growled at him.

Hopping over another furniture wall, I came to the open area in front of the boss. Almost as soon as I entered the space, it moved its right cannon arm away and bent its double-jointed left arm to reach into its open head hole with its many-fingered hand, before pulling out an enormous sword that was white-blue with a glowing green edge.

I’d only just landed from my jump when it swung its sword down at me.

“Dodgeroll!” Panda yelled and I did, but not just because he told me to.

The weapon passed through me, leaving a thick gouge in the floor, and I came up a few feet away from it and immediately swung my left fist at the wrist of the large hand. The impact resounded loudly and knocked the arm away, before I continued closing the distance to the flesh mound.

“Dodge!” Panda yelled again and I instinctively leapt into the air, as the blade came back with a sweeping slash. The top of my head hit against the ceiling, but as I fell back down I cocked my left arm back and prepared to strike.

A small barely-perceptible needle struck the Instructor in the center of his flesh mound, before popping the skin open and creating a hole into his body. I aimed my fist there, and in the last moment before I struck, I yelled:

“*Punch.harder()*!”

My last recursive punch had decimated the Siren, and while Brock wasn’t fitted to my left hand, there was no way the Instructor would survive.

Ripple-after-ripple rolled through the mound of flesh with every lightning-fast jab, and every third hit seriously ramping up the damage, but before I even got to the third *Math.multiply(Punch)* it was already over. And for once, my left arm had survived, though the thumb and index fingers were broken and my wrist and elbow joints were sprained.

I felt as the Dungeon ejected us for clearing it, but instead of excitement or joy, I just felt annoyed. I’d find the Police Chief, no matter *where* he was hiding. This was a promise I made to myself.