

## Chapter -39

If not for the off-white silken cocoon fabric of the walls, the office of the Production Control would seem almost normal. Of course, the desks and monitors were placed in a way that could accommodate the spider humanoids we’d exterminated, but otherwise it could easily have been the interior of one of the ugly towers in downtown Castleburg.

All of the workstations had been abandoned, but the screens and monitors were still active, despite no cables tied to them.

“It’s probably some bullshit magic,” I muttered.

*“Smash ‘em with me!!”*

I was just about to take Brock up on the offer, when I saw what was depicted on one of the nearby screens. It was a man with a Satyr-like transformation that’d given him furry hooves, a tail, red-purple skin, and ram’s horns. What’s more, he wielded a bow instead of a gun and was in the middle of a heated 1-on-1 with another man wielding an-honest-to-God AK47... and somehow the bow-wielder was winning.

“I wonder if he’s Glitched too?”

“Gambit, you oaf, come back here!” Panda yelled as Bee rounded the corner into the room with him on top of her head, his soft arms curled around her antenna as though they were steering sticks.

“Oh, there you are,” he said, his frustration immediately deflated.

“Look at this guy,” I told him, pointing to the screen. The Satyr had won against the AK47 guy, without being hit even once.

Bee read the name that floated next to him. “William Twine.”

I turned around and looked at a different screen. On it was a man and a woman, both clad in Roman God-esque attire, looking like Mars and Justitia. Their skin was an olive tan and they had golden-glowing eyes. As we watched, the woman pointed her hand at an attacking Player, conjuring a golden spear in the air that quickly impaled him, while the man deflected the bullets with some kind of holy bubble.

“Look like some real goodie-two-shoes,” Panda remarked.

“Logan and Ophelia Maximillian,” Bee read. “They’re like supermodels.”

“Bet you they’re framed as the ‘good guys’,” I commented. I’d seen their type before and they were always hailed as paragons of morality. It was sickening to watch, so I looked away.

On a nearby screen was someone I recognized.

“Is that Tina?”

Panda quickly spun around on Bee’s head, then went, “Oh, you’re right!”

Tina was someone who had been in the Asylum with me for a bit, before being transferred to Madeville after escaping and assaulting a guy with battery acid. She was the kind of psycho that made everyone else seem normal by comparison, with a list of mental problems longer than the wishlist Santa got every year. But the main issue with her was the split personalities, because sometimes she had been kind and polite, but, as was evident from what I saw on the screen, she was currently in the persona that everyone had labelled ‘Nina’. I was unsure if she’d come up with the name herself or if it was someone else, but the name had stuck.

I watched as she used a bayonet on the end of a double-barrel to gore a guy, before releasing a blast of acidic spikes that melted through him and the nearby wall. Although there wasn’t any sound emanating from the screens, it was clear that ‘Nina’ was cackling like a maniac all the while. Her appearance was also very different from the black-haired woman I’d known, as she was now bald, grey-skinned, and covered in tattoos, with three additional gnarled limbs sprouting from her back.

As two women charged for her with their own guns blaring, she casually reloaded her shotgun, while the three arms on her back began moving in a peculiar pattern, forming a ball of floating acid that was quickly sent towards them. It burst apart about four feet in front of them and absolutely drenched their bodies in voracious chemicals that ate through flesh and clothes, before the psycho leapt for them and began hacking them apart with the bayonet of her gun.

“She seems fun,” Bee remarked.

I let out a sigh. “Just as lovely as ever, isn’t she, Panda?”

“She terrifies me,” he just said.

“*Oi, I’m bored.*”

“You literally just killed over thirty people,” Panda scolded Brock.

“*It’s worn off, the high. Bored as, if I’m honest.*”

I pulled my stare away from Nina. “Let’s keep going.”

We moved through the office, only to end up in another, before following a tunnel that brought us down, where yet more offices lay.

“...See,” Panda said, gesturing around us. “You just killed office workers!”

“You’re *still* complaining about that?” I asked him.

“It was less than twenty minutes ago, you goddamn *maniac!*”

“Pandamonium,” Bee started, using his full name to indicate that she was upset. “Do not call him names! If you are going to be upset, be upset at me. Gambit just backed me up. I was the one who took the first shot.”

“That’s not fair!” he complained. “I can’t be mad at you. You’re just a kid!”

“I’m not a kid!” she replied.

I continued onward while they were busy bickering. All of the screens we passed by were just more Players taking part in the event. There were several that stood out and, as a consequence, were being tracked and displayed on the screens, but while someone else might have taken the time to study the competition, I just found that I really didn’t care.

“Don’t worry!” Panda suddenly told me. “I’ve got a beat on all the dangerous-looking Players. I know you don’t care about that.”

“Stop reading my mind.”

“You’re an open book.”

“I know you’ve got psychic powers, you creepy teddy bear wannabe,” I said with a scowl.

Panda stood up to his full height atop Bee’s head, putting his arms on his ‘hips’. “Say that again, Birthday Boy. I dare you.”

“Do you think they’re all from Castleburg?” Bee asked, interrupting us.

I broke eye-contact with the plushie, then shook my head and said, “It has to be at least Madeville and one-or-two other towns. When I used my Dungeon-Break ability, it said there were over 16 thousand people alive.”

“Only?” she asked. “I thought Castleburg alone had 80 thousand.”

“A lot were probably kids, then the rest were either hiding in public facilities and got turned into monsters or were killed when the Great Game started. Accounting for all that, maybe Castleburg alone had 10 thousand, if we’re being generous.”

“Many people *did* die since the power and all that went out,” she answered thoughtfully.

Panda still looked like he wanted to fight me, but I was over it already.

We moved from office to office, until eventually we escaped the large cocoon structure housing them all and came to a small room that sprouted like a bulbous growth on the very bottom. As we walked out of the tunnel and into this room, we saw that there was only one thing here. It was neither a screen or a desk, nor even a spider creature. However, its presence did make the hairs on my skin stand up, as though it supercharged the air.

I reached out and said, “*Inspect.*”

**ERROR!**

Inspection failed!

This is not an inanimate object.

“It’s alive?” Panda muttered.

I pulled out my Looking Glass and scanned it.

Level 33	'Psychic Snail'	Enemy <small>x</small>
<p data-bbox="651 748 943 781"><i>“I can see your mind.”</i></p> <p data-bbox="352 831 1241 864"><i>Players aren't meant to learn about these creatures, but here we are.</i></p> <p data-bbox="285 913 1308 1160"><i>Sometimes the System creates Enemies that never feature in Dungeons, Events, nor roam around in the world. Instead, those Enemies serve a unique purpose tied to the operation of the <b>GREAT GAME</b>. In the case of the Psychic Snail, its purpose is to be the very means by which the Broadcast Department is capable of keeping a track of Players taking part in Events. Those images you saw on those screens were all thanks to this bizarre specimen.</i></p> <p data-bbox="280 1209 1313 1456"><i>They are quite weak by nature, since they don't have a natural habitat or any sort of defenses against attackers, as their only purpose in life is to be a telepathic medium that guides the Eye-Spy Drones and predicts exciting scenarios for the Broadcast Department to film. Ironically, it can't predict its own fate, hence why there was no warning for the people you slaughtered about your arrival.</i></p> <p data-bbox="301 1505 1292 1583"><i>Please just turn around and pretend like you didn't see this. We'll give you a nice reward if you do.</i></p> <p data-bbox="703 1632 892 1666"><b>—PLUGIN—</b></p> <p data-bbox="722 1686 873 1720"><b>'unCollide'</b></p>		

“...It’s a *what?*”

“It has a Plugin!” Panda noticed.

“I guess I have to kill it then,” I said.

—Patreon-exclusive Copy—  
—Kristoffer Pauly (aka “Dosei”)—

**WARNING!**

**Glitch-Hunter Task Force deploying to your area!**

**We know where you are.**

**You cannot hide.**

**Extermination imminent.**

“Ah, what now...”