

Chapter -41

As we were moving back through the structure, leaving behind the room that’d held the Psychic Snail, the floor and walls wobbled uncertainly, as though the fabric was under intense pressure from outside.

Bee was staying behind me, Panda still on top of her head, while I led the way with Brock held at the ready.

We were passing by the now-dead screens and monitors of one of the many office rooms, when suddenly the wall ahead of us tore open, revealing a bulky figure. His body was like that of the Beetle Agents but larger in every way and almost eight feet tall, plus the species of Beetle his carapace imitated was different as well. What’s more, his right forearm was inflated to three times its normal girth, as though the weapon buried in his palm could release much more devastating projectiles than that of his smaller cousins.

I swung my Looking Glass up, getting a quick glimpse before charging ahead.

Level 85	'#17'	Glitch Hunter ^x
<p><i>“Glitch spotted. Extermination imminent.”</i></p> <p>Job: <i>Glitch Hunter</i> Affiliation: <i>Glitch-Hunter Task Force</i></p> <p><i>While the Agents of the REPD generally handle System Subversion, they are not the upper echelon of those handling Glitches. Instead they are like the Local Police, whereas the Glitch Hunters are Federal. It’s not exactly the best comparison, but all you need to know is that these guys are fucking scary. They are called in for times when a major Subversion is suspected to happen.</i></p> <p><i>They are allowed to utilize System skills that violate the System itself, which is quite ironic, but they function off the “fight fire with fire” mentality. Thus, whatever advantage you think you might have probably doesn’t exist.</i></p> <p><i>You should definitely run.</i></p> <p><i>They seem eager to hurt you.</i></p>		

“Don’t fight that guy!” Panda yelled, but I’d already leapt at him.

With a diagonal swing, I sent the triple-headed hammer directly at the Hunter’s face, but it passed through his body, as he turned translucent and incorporeal. It seemed similar to the I-Frames passive I’d unlocked.

As he lifted his right arm towards me, the Double Trouble Ghost Strike followed the motions of my initial swing, but this one could hit incorporeal matter, as it, for some reason, classified metaphysical matter as a type of ‘armour’.

¿ BONK ?

It was hard to gauge the expressions of a Beetle like him, but I was fairly sure he was surprised, before the 4x knockback of my Plugin triggered and sent him down into the floor with so much speed that he just passed through the web fabric. Actually, it wasn’t because of the speed, but rather my Glitch Collision passive, I realized.

“What just happened!?” Panda asked. “He disappeared!”

“I think I sent him through the building,” I muttered.

Then I heard a tearing of fabric next to me, and the same Glitch Hunter fell out of the rift in reality, landing on his armored feet, before swinging his arm up.

“***Recursive.action(Beetle_Bolt)***,” he said.

In the same moment, I awkwardly dodgerolled towards him, just as something like a thousand spinning and buzzing Beetle Bolts tore through the spot that I rolled across, each projectile faster than the previous one. The last few came so quickly that they popped the air with tiny bursts of supersonic shockwaves.

Thanks to my I-Frames, the dodgeroll made the projectiles tear through me as I became incorporeal. I was glad to learn that the collision with objects didn’t affect the ground, but only attacks, as I’d otherwise have dropped through the floor.

I leapt up from below and hit him in the crotch with Brock. This time his incorporeal defense didn’t activate, and I sent him upwards into the ceiling with the first impact.

BONK!

Once again, he flew through the fabric, but this time his feet were stuck on our side, while it seemed like his body continued moving. Although I couldn't see his body outside, I guessed, from the horrific stretching and tearing sound, that he was experiencing a very traumatic amputation of his legs.

Another rift appeared above me, and the Glitch Hunter once again rematerialized, falling to the ground in a spatter of white paint-like blood, with the bottom-half of his body now three times longer than before and half as thin. A moment later his feet fell down from the ceiling.

“Holy shit, Gambit!” Panda exclaimed at the result of what I'd done.

“Beetle Blast,” Bee exclaimed, sending a needle-sized projectile at the Hunter's head. The projectile not only failed to penetrate and plinked off his carapace, but it also curved weirdly through the air and reflected back into Bee's upper torso, where it sunk in and disappeared.

I watched in horror as the carapace on her body expanded.

“Beetle Brawn!” she quickly yelled to counteract the effect, but then a loud pop blasted apart her upper torso, spraying white blood like that of the Hunter, before she collapsed to the ground.

“Bee!” I yelled in terror.

“Gambit, you've gotta use the Back Door to get her out of here!” Panda yelled, his chubby and plushie body standing in front of where she'd fallen, his hands on her as though he could actually do something to save her from the grapefruit-sized hole in her body.

I swung Brock down onto the head of the Hunter who was prone on the ground, but a gust of condensed wind exploded outward from his body, sending me flying backwards into a monitor that broke under my weight. Even the Ghost Strike was repelled and dissipated.

When I looked back at him, his body had returned to normal and he was getting back to his feet.

“Fuck!” I shouted in frustration, then quickly hurried over and scooped Bee up into my arms, before running back the way we'd just come.

Panda quickly crawled onto my shoulder.

“You've gotta use it, Gambit!”

“I don't know how!” I yelled.

“Just say the name of the ability and think about the boundary you'd like to cross. I don't know, imagine that you're stepping through a door that leads to the room with the Colored Paths or something! Just hurry!”

A tremor rolled through the floor as the Glitch Hunter came in hot pursuit.

“*back_door.bat!*” I yelled, trying to follow Panda’s instructions, while continuing to put distance between us and the unkillable Hunter.

Then I stumbled forward as the tip of my shoe hooked on part of the floor.

I landed on my knees, the impact of stones sending a jarring jolt up through my body and making me drop Bee.

As I looked to where she’d tumbled, I saw that the surroundings were different.

We were no longer in the Production Control. We were back near the Colored Doors where I’d used the Conspiracy Whistle and gotten a lot of people killed as a result. Also, the thing I’d tripped on wasn’t the floor, but rather the dead body of the woman who’d shot me.

I scrambled over to Bee’s side, not really thinking about how we’d escaped the Glitch Hunter, but rather focusing on the fact that I needed to save her.

Quickly navigating through my inventory, I pulled out the Survival Kit and the Sewing Kit inside. Though I had no idea how it’d work on her strange carapace-covered skin, I quickly began moving the needle through her body, circling the hole in her torso.

It seemed clear that his Beetle Brawn ability had saved her life, but not by much, as she had stopped breathing completely.

When I finished with my shoddy needlework, the flesh quickly healed back to normal, before turning green and becoming covered in a tough carapace. I moved her around to get a look at her back, since the explosion had torn a hole all the way through, but it had also been healed.

“She’s not breathing!” Panda panicked.

“Relax!” I yelled at him. “I’m already panicking here! I need you to be the voice of reason! What do I do now??”

“I don’t know! Shake her or something!?”

I shook her, but nothing happened.

“*Use CPR ya numbskulls!*” Brock scolded us.

“Got it!”

I moved her onto her back, then began using both of my hands to push against her chest with a steady motion, making sure to apply enough pressure that it actually had an effect, which was easier said than done, due to the thickness of her carapace.

For what felt like hours, I kept up this rhythm, until suddenly Panda exclaimed, “She’s alive!”

I immediately lifted my hands away and she began coughing violently, some blood coming out with spit and bile.

“Ugh,” she groaned.

Panda immediately hugged her arm.

“Oh god, I’m so glad you’re not dead!” the plushie wailed.

“What happened?” she asked, looking around. “Where are we?”

“We’re back in the Game Event,” I said.

There was a pause as she looked around, then she said, “Aw...”

“What?”

“I didn’t get a weapon...”

I laughed. “You need your priorities checked!”

“But I really wanted my own talking weapon! Like maybe a scythe or a flamethrower.”

“Yiz got Brock!!”

Bee sat up. “I suppose I’ll be ranged backup then.”

“Wait...” Panda said, annoyed. “After *all that* we’re still going to kill more Players?? I thought you went there to stop the Broadcast and end the Event to save everyone!”

“What?” I asked, confused. “No, that’s not why I went there at all. I just wanted to kill the Announcer.”

“You’re a real piece of work,” he commented.

I got back to my feet. “This time we’re picking the Red door,” I said and walked over to where the guy who’d turned into a furry monster lay dead. I nudged his broken corpse aside with my shoe, then pulled the handle to open the door.

“Are you coming?”

Bee lifted Panda up onto her head, then joined me by the door.

“Let’s go kill some of those posers we saw,” she replied confidently.

“I wonder if there’s any Class that specializes in helping people like you,” Panda mused.

“Don’t forget you need us to be insane to see you,” I told him. “It’d be quite lonely for you if we were sane. Besides, it just seems boring.”

“I’m slowly realizing the problem inherent with my existence...” he replied.

I changed the topic. “Last time, you said this would’ve been the Boss door, but since there aren’t any bosses here, it’ll be a surprise what we get.”

“I love surprises,” Bee said.

“Brock loves ‘em too!!”

“I hope it’s a blender trap so I won’t have to deal with you two anymore,” Panda joked darkly.

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

Bee and I both walked through the doorway, before it quickly closed and became a wall against our backs.