

Chapter -90

We were still several miles out from the Mayor’s house, but I stopped to check the cube’s timer, since I was sure it would offer a good reward worth all the wait:

‘Unique Skill Cube’ x
<i>The puzzle has been solved, but the Cube will not open until the timer has expired.</i>
Time remaining: <i>29 minutes 32 seconds</i>
Weight: 1 Panda

“Your longboard is ready by the way, if you’re tired of running,” Panda said.

Bee landed next to me and immediately took a seat on the bench I was leaning against. There were some stores around us along the street, with a mechanic’s shop nearby that was clearly a dungeon, though there were no signs of the monsters it spawned. The reason for that was fairly obvious though: a deep groove in the asphalt of the road showed that this place was on the route of a Humanbus.

“I’m starving,” she said.

“Even though your Benefactor is feeding you regularly?” I asked.

“I’m still growing, y’know. I *need* sustenance!”

“What about that pizzeria over there?” Panda asked, pointing to a restaurant on the other side of the street that was completely destroyed.

“I doubt we’d find fresh pizzas inside,” I remarked. “Best case scenario: we find just the ingredients for making one...”

“What about *that* place?” Bee pointed to a shop on our side of the road, next to the mechanic.

I read the sign, “‘*Huge Cans*’ ... really?”

The text below read ‘*Castleburg’s Most Trusted Canned Goods!*’

Without waiting to hear our response, Bee got up from the bench with a thrum of her mothwings, alighting in front of the entrance and walking in. I quickly followed after her and into the store.

Within were dozens of thick metal standing shelves, many of which were knocked over, and just cans *everywhere*. Many of the cans were opened, some had been used for target practice, others were crushed and their contents splattered over the floor, but in amongst them all were still a good amount of ones in seemingly-okay condition.

Bee appeared from behind a shelf that leant against another, holding two cans aloft with a look of victory on her face. “Look! ‘*Preserved Pineapple Balls*’!”

“Pineapple *balls*? Not rings?” Panda asked.

I stooped to pick up one that lay close to the door. “...‘*Fermented Tuna Salad*’? Ew.”

“I also found ‘*Pickled Omelet*’ and a full can of ‘*Horseradish*’.”

“That sounds wildly unhealthy to consume together,” I noted.

“I think horseradish is good for you,” she replied.

“Not if it’s the only thing you eat...”

I waded through the sea of cans, using my squishy Schmonic Boots to plow them all aside, while heading through to some of the shelves further in. There were four shelves leant against each other, as though to hide something within, and I squeezed my way through a narrow opening to find a single can that’d been spray-painted gold.

“*Inspect.*”

‘Golden Fusion Urchin’	x
<i>...in a can.</i>	
<i>These are most commonly handed out as special rewards, but they can also be found hidden around the world, though there is never more than one per Region. This is the only one that can be found in a can... We’re not sure why the System planted it there, but not all of its decisions are comprehensible.</i>	
<i>‘What does it do?’ you’re no doubt asking out loud right now. First off, stop interrupting me, I’m getting to it. Secondly, this:</i>	

*Consume to form a **Golden Fusion** between two skills currently in your possession. The resultant fusion skill will become **Legendary**, giving it the highest potential possible.*

*Alternatively, this can be fed to a familiar to increase its **Maturity by 50%***

Weight: 1 Panda

“**Meow,**” said Lordie in its Morgan-Freeman-impersonating voice.

“What’d you find?” Bee asked. Panda was sitting on her shoulder now, though I had neither seen nor felt him move from atop mine.

I shared the inspection with her.

“Woah.”

“Lordie wants it,” I replied.

“I think you should eat it,” she said.

“**Meow!**” protested Lordie.

“He *really* wants it.”

“I agree with Bee on this,” Panda said. “So far Lordie has contributed nothing. Half the time I don’t even notice he’s there, to be honest.”

“Sorry buddy,” I said, patting the sentient hand on my head.

“**Meow..**”

I grabbed the top of the can with Brock and easily peeled off the metal lid. Inside was a small piece of bright orange-yellow sea urchin in perfect condition.

“Before you eat it, can you open this for me?” Bee asked, handing me a can labeled ‘Sandwich’.

“*Why* do you want to eat this?”

“Please?” she insisted.

I sighed and tore off the lid, revealing that it was literally just a ham-and-egg sandwich that’d been forcefully shoved into the can. Bee took it from me gratefully and just poured the contents straight into her mouth. The ‘sandwich’ came out in a single can-shaped clump that she swallowed without pause. Her black tongue ran across her lips.

“4 out of 10,” she then said, before gesturing to the golden can that I’d set down in front of myself on the floor.

I reached in with a finger and scooped out the small piece. The texture was strangely-mushy, but when I put it in my mouth it was refreshingly-salty and had a complex aftertaste. It took me a second to realize that I could actually taste its real flavor and not vanilla-banana ice-cream or synthetic grape.

“10 out of 10!” I exclaimed.

Then its effect kicked in.

ACTIVATING GOLDEN SKILL FUSION!

Choose two Abilities or Passives to combine:

“What are you going to combine? I think if the result is Legendary, it should be your main ability,” Panda advised.

“That’s exactly what I was thinking too,” I replied. Then I said to the interface: “Combine ‘Punch.harder()’ with ‘Glitch’.”

COMBINING SKILLS!

Please wait a moment, while we combine the skills and roll for the most favorable traits based on the two components!

...

...

...

New **Legendary fusion skill created!**

Congratulations!

You have unlocked the new Ability:

‘Punch.spinTheWheel()’

“Spin the wheel?” I wondered and brought up the skill information.

<i>‘Punch.spinTheWheel()’</i>	x
<i>Ability</i>	
<i>“Do you feel lucky?”</i>	

“Are you prepared to take out a second mortgage to win big!?”

“Then go on and SPIN THE WHEEL!!!”

Every time you activate this ability and connect a punch, a Lottery Wheel will spin to determine the outcome. These range between everything from devastating impacts, monetary wins and losses, self-inflicted damage, and environmental effects.

Every outcome you land on is removed from the wheel and replaced with something else, such that you never know what to expect!

Cooldown: 30 seconds

“That sounds like it has the potential to really backfire,” Panda muttered in concern.

I wasn’t worried though. “RNG is on my side,” I boasted. Panda looked skeptical, meanwhile Bee was slamming two cans against each other in an attempt to open them. One of the cans had the very cursed label ‘*Birthday Cake*’ on it, while the other was the one with horseradish inside.

Congratulations! You have unlocked an achievement! ^x

‘Finders Keepers!’

Discovered and used a Golden Fusion Urchin.

You know, at some point, all of this just becomes too suspicious for us not to scrutinize. No one believes for a second that you just ‘happened’ to find the rarest item in your entire Region by accident. There is no way that you have so many Region-first achievements without help from outside!

*For several reasons, one of which is the believed collusion with an **Agency Insider**, an **Adjudicator** has been summoned*

*to your location. It will render judgement upon you and
obliterate your misbegotten stain of an existence from our*

GREAT GAME!

But do enjoy your reward until then.

Reward: ‘Sea Urchin Ring’

Before I had a chance to inspect the orange-yellow and squishy ring that fell into my hand, two announcements followed in quick succession.

WARNING TO ALL CASTLEBURG PLAYERS!

Player ‘**Gambit**’ has just found and used the only **Golden Fusion Urchin** in your Region! The riches he has attained thanks to this discovery are yours to claim! All you need to do is kill him and take these riches for yourself!

To that end, he has been marked with a beacon for the next six hours!

WARNING!

A GREAT GAME ADJUDICATOR HAS BEEN SUMMONED!

CEASE HOSTILITIES OR BE VAPORISED!

VACATE THE LANDING ZONE IMMEDIATELY!

“Ah shit... Here we go again.”