Chapter -89

WARNING TO ALL CASTLEBURG PLAYERS!

Player 'Gambit' has won the public Manhunt Quest by taking down 'Logan Maximillian'!

Although no one was able to directly kill the Wanted Player, the Winner was decided based on who contributed the most:

#1 — 'Gambit'

#2 — Deceased

#3 — Deceased

#4 — 'Bee'

#5 — Deceased

I smacked my chin against the pedestrian pavement as I plopped out of the Veterinarian Clinic's glass doors.

"Ow."

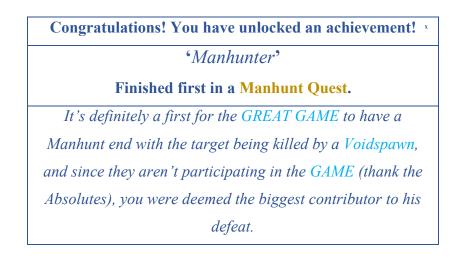"Are you okay?" Bee asked, helping me to my feet.

"That was wild," I muttered.

"I didn't get to see any of it," she replied, sounding jealous.

"Gambit almost died!" Panda yelled. "That was extremely reckless!"

I shrugged. "At least I got Logan, and his dumb Concoction isn't affecting me anymore."

A series of achievements suddenly rolled in:

Congratulations! You have unlocked an achievement! ^x
'*Manhunter*'   **Finished first in a Manhunt Quest.**
It's definitely a first for the GREAT GAME to have a Manhunt end with the target being killed by a Voidspawn, and since they aren't participating in the GAME (thank the Absolutes), you were deemed the biggest contributor to his defeat.

Fun fact: Avid Surfer, *'Tanner Tylerson'*, was meant to have been #2, but he died because you told him to stay put. His surviving relatives and friends have just been sent a private announcement that **you** were responsible for his death.

Enjoy your rewards, Player-Killer.

Rewards: 50x *'Game Coins'* & *'Manhunter Badge'*

Congratulations! You have unlocked an achievement! ˣ

'*Dungeon Challenged***'**

Completed your first Challenge Dungeon.

We don't at all like what you just did to our beautiful Dungeon. It's literally broken forever because you removed the Dungeon Barrier. Thanks to you, all Players who enter will now just be consumed by Voidspawn.

We have filed a complaint with an Adjudicator. If it sides with us, you will be reduced to slime, and NOT the sentient kind!

In the meantime, enjoy your reward, Glitch.

Reward: *'Challenger's Stopwatch'*

Congratulations! You have unlocked an achievement! ˣ

'*The Hospital Rooms (East Wing) First Clear***'**

Cleared The Hospital Rooms (East Wing) for the first time.

That was wrong.

*We **really** hated that.*

> *The fact that we have to award you achievements for subverting our meticulous and grand designs is frankly abhorrent. Do you even know how many of our Dungeon Architects have had to call in sick because of you!?*
>
> *Please take the following rewards and use them to bludgeon yourself to a pulp.*
>
> *Sincerely,*
> *Everyone who worked on the Dungeon you just shat all over*
>
> **Rewards:** 15x '*Game Coins*' & '*Surgeon's Scalpel*'

A golden star-shaped badge like one of those cowboy sheriffs wore fell into my hand, along with a black digital stopwatch with a red button on top, and a scalpel that dug into Brock's purple balloon flesh, but failed to pop him.

"*Oy Gamby, keep sharp objects away from me!!*"

I picked the scalpel up first and inspected it:

'Surgeon's Scalpel'	x
Lick the blade.	
Don't hesitate, just do it.	
(Yes, we're recording it)	
((No, you won't receive royalties))	
Weight: 1 Panda	

"I've got the feeling that all these items are just for them to film and put on some kind of vile fetish reel. That's probably where all their funding for the show comes from."

"Just lick the damn scalpel and get it over with. Not like they don't already have a ton of footage of you in compromised positions."

Bee was already licking hers, using a black tongue that honestly freaked me out by how weird-looking it was.
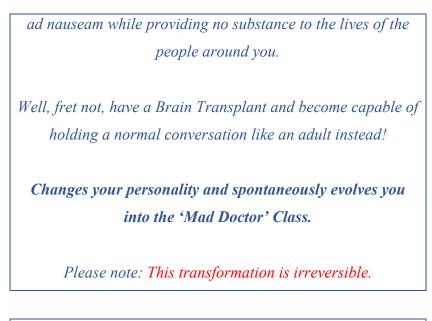
I ran my own tongue along the metallic handle, feeling the dregs of my integrity slip away. It melted as though made from cotton candy and vanished from my hand.

Choose your reward!	x
I hope the taste of metal fills your mouth, you dirty little Surgeon.	
Pick one of the options: ‘[Injection]’ | ‘Brain Transplant’ | ‘Doctor's Nightmare’	

I sighed and looked through the skills.

‘[Injection]’	x
Ability	
I'm not sure that's how an injection works…	
Perform a harmless poke that shares all the negative effects in your body with your target.	
Cooldown: *2 minutes*	

‘Brain Transplant’	x
Passive	
You know how some people tell you that you should change something about yourself? Maybe you're one of those humans, whose brains have been defiled by an overindulgence of internet videos, and now you just quote your favorite lines	

> *ad nauseam while providing no substance to the lives of the people around you.*
>
> *Well, fret not, have a Brain Transplant and become capable of holding a normal conversation like an adult instead!*
>
> **Changes your personality and spontaneously evolves you into the 'Mad Doctor' Class.**
>
> *Please note: This transformation is irreversible.*

'Doctor's Nightmare'   x

Passive

9/10 Doctors hate your guts.

You become hostile to almost all Doctors, except for those delving into the dark arts of Homeopathy. In return, you can now cure ailments by eating apples.

"If you take [Injection], it might be possible to transfer your purple curse, and maybe your insanity."
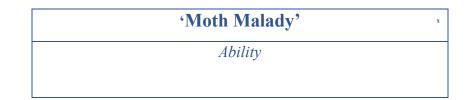
"Do you think I could transfer Glitch as well?"

"I doubt they'd let you."

"Worth a try, at least."

I picked the Injection skill.

"Look what I got," Bee said and shared her choice with me.

'Moth Malady'   x

Ability

> *Hark, the song of my people!*
> **annoying chittering ensues**
>
> **Emit an indescribable noise that causes all who listen to it to slowly turn insane, with a 2% increase to their Insanity Gauge every 5 seconds. It also attracts all moths within a mile to your location.**

"Nice."

"You do know that you're not supposed to intentionally turn people insane, right?" Panda asked. "Seems to me that you both missed that part of the Great Game…"

"Hey Bee, can I try my new ability on you?" I asked, ignoring his preaching.

"Will it hurt?"

"I don't think so."

"Okay!"

I poked her with my left index finger and activated the skill. A tiny tingle flowed through my fingernail and into her. Then nothing seemed to happen.

Bee suddenly squatted down and spat out a little purple ball of goo. It landed on the pavement and began wriggling around as eye-stalks sprouted from it, then it disappeared in a puff of purple smoke with a scream.

"Ugh," she groaned. "Everything tastes like grape now…"

"Sorry," I said.

She blinked in surprised, then focused on a screen I couldn't see.

"My Benefactor just sent me something. There's a thing for you as well."

"Uh oh," Panda said. "Maybe you upset the All-Mother…"

Bee pulled a translucent raspberry out of thin air and tossed it into her mouth, then handed me a yellow pear shaped like a muffin.

I inspected it:

> ### 'Muffin-Top Pearnana'   x
>
> *A special fruit grown in the bountiful gardens of the Absolute known as the All-Mother.*

Eating this fruit has an unknown effect.
Weight: 0.5 Pandas

"Should I really eat this?"

"To not eat it would be to refuse the gift of an Absolute," Panda said, sounding very serious. "You should definitely eat it! And try to make it seem like you *really* like the taste."

I took a bite of it, expecting the ever-present taste of synthetic grape.

"Oh my god," I muttered, on the verge of crying. "It tastes like vanilla-banana ice-cream!"

WARNING!

You have been infected with '*The Muffin-Top Pearnana Effect*'!

Time remaining:

∞

"Ah, shit," Panda muttered. "She was definitely mad at you for inflicting Bee with your purple touch."

"It's okay, All-Mommy gave me a cure."

"I don't think you should call her that," the plushie advised.

"That's how she's signing off her messages to me."

"Oh… that's… weird, I think."

"She said she likes me as a Moth. She's very nice."

"Guys… I think I realized what the Pearnana does…" I said.

"What?" they both asked.

"It changed my purple curse. Look!"

I lifted Brock into the air to show them.

"*Mah fakkin body!!*" he wailed.

"So, he's just yellow now?" Panda asked.

"I kind of thought it'd be more serious than that," Bee added.

"I guess that I now only taste vanilla-banana ice-cream, which isn't so bad," I admitted.

"*But mah body!?*" Brock complained.

"Yellow suits you," Bee told him.

"*Ah. Well that changes things.*"

"I think I'll learn to hate this new flavor," I muttered, "But change is good. So long as it's superficial and doesn't require fixing anything that's actually wrong with me."

I looked at the other two objects in my hand and inspected them.

'Manhunter Badge'   _x

*"I've **killed** before and I'll do it again!"*

- you, probably

While this Badge is pinned to your clothes, you can mark another Player in your line-of-sight and always know which direction they are in, no matter the distance between you.

The effect lasts until your target dies or you switch to another.

Weight: 0.3 Pandas

'Challenger's Stopwatch'   _x

This one-time-use item comes in handy in a pinch or when you just need a bit more time to finish an important quiz.

Allows you to stop* time for 10 seconds.

Charge: 1/1

Weight: 0.8 Pandas

"I didn't get a badge," Bee said enviously, a frown on her face.

"Did you get anything from finishing 4th?"

"Twenty coins…"

"Did you at least get a Stopwatch?"

"Yep!"

"I wonder if it actually stops time for everyone," Panda said.

At his words, I noticed the little asterisk next to the word 'stop'.

"Seems like it would be something stupid. If it stopped time for everyone except the user, then it would be really powerful, but that's probably not the case."

"Where to now?" Bee suddenly asked, changing subject.

"Well, I have no idea if Logan was chasing after the Mayor or just leading us on a wild chase, but I say we go to the Mayor's house and see if we can't find a clue or something."

"Your skateboard is still on cooldown," Panda reminded me.

"It's fine, I'll just run," I replied. "I kind of feel like running again, now that I'm not slow as hell."

I pinned the Manhunter Badge to the front of my suit, where it somehow stuck to with ease, then I targeted Bee with its ability and instinctively knew where she was positioned in relation to me. Then I took off in the general direction of the Mayor's house.