

Chapter -104

[NEXT STOP: YUMMY-YUMMY, CATCH A RIDE IN MY TUMMY!] came the beckoning call of the Humanbus as it continued chasing after the Players nearby, crashing through several houses to get to them from the sounds of it.

Bee and I were heading back towards the Mansion, while trying not to draw any attention to ourselves.

“How are we supposed to get *below* the Mansion?” I wondered.

“There’s a manhole over there,” Bee said, pointing further up the middle of the street.

“The sewers...” Panda muttered disapprovingly.

“Afraid of getting a little dirty?” I teased him.

Back when I’d broken into the Mayor’s Mansion, I’d seriously contemplated sneaking up through the sewers to his house, but in the end it hadn’t been necessary. Not to mention, I wasn’t even sure it would’ve worked.

“I’m not worried about *that*,” he countered. “I’m more worried about what might live in the sewers now...”

“I think he’s claustrophobic,” Bee said.

“You might be on to something.”

“Can you two shut it before the bus comes back and just go down there already!?”

“Sheesh, touchy subject,” Bee winced.

I knelt down next to the manhole and pulled the cover off with a simple tug. It was easy to forget just how much stronger I was now.

“Ladies first.” I gestured to the open hole from which reeked a stench strong enough to vaporize the hairs in my nostrils. Nearly two weeks without running water had really not helped the sewers, that much was sure.

“Perhaps I was wrong about the sewers being the way to get below the Mansion,” Bee back-pedaled.

“I’m sure you were spot on. Now, go on, hop in, the water should be pleasantly-warm.”

She gagged at my description.

“I really don’t want to. Plus, I can’t fly down there.”

“Is this really how our group breaks apart?” I asked with a frown.

[NEXT STOP: I SMELL PASSENGERS, YUMMY!]

We both looked up to see the Humanbus turning a corner onto the street further ahead and coming towards us in a furious scamper of the many chubby legs dragging it along the ground. The unhinged foglight eyes and gaping mouth with massive molars made Bee produce a small *Eeep!* and she immediately hopped down into the open manhole.

I pinched my nose and followed her, just as the galloping Humanbus tore across the asphalt where we’d stood.

A splash of warm liquid came up to meet me as I was halfway down the darkness, only for me to hit the water a moment later. Chunks of oh-God-I-don’t-want-to-know-what-that-is floated around in the pool that Bee and I landed in, and I did my best to not open my mouth nor unpinch my nostrils.

While swimming back up to the surface, the Transition Lenses passive slowly gave me the ability to see through the darkness, even underwater. The moment I got my head above water, I released a long string of expletives.

Bee had already found her way to a raised bit of stone on the edge of the pool and she was flapping her wings furiously to get rid of all the nasty water and the stuff that’d been floating in it, such as a liquified rat’s corpse the size of a small child.

I pulled myself up next to her.

“That sucked,” she said.

“I kind of thought we’d just land in ankle-high water at worst,” I replied, while sifting sewer gunk out of my hair.

We both looked up towards the ceiling, which was easily twenty feet above us. There wasn’t a service ladder or anything, it was just a hole that led into this underground tunnel system full of literal shit.

Congratulations! You have unlocked an achievement! ^x
<i>‘The Cultist Manor First Clear’</i> Cleared The Cultist Mansion for the first time.
<i>Hey, would you look at that, you actually beat a Dungeon without insulting the efforts of everyone who worked on it.</i> <i>Congratulations!</i>

*The Cult had quite a few trinkets and relics stashed away.
Since you’ve been a good boy, we’ll reward you with one
that’ll help you find what you seek.*

Rewards: ‘Silver Skull’ & ‘Soul Compass’

Congratulations! You have unlocked an achievement! ^x

‘Don’t drink the water’

Took a dive into the sewers.

Welcome to the sewers.

*It may smell like crap down here, but there are nuggets of
gold to be found amongst all the turds.*

*The corridors down here are like mazes and it is easy to get
lost in your search for an exit, so you’re gonna need this:*

Reward: ‘Blank Sewer Map’

“They’re being uncharacteristically kind,” Panda remarked, as a rolled-up scroll landed in my hands, along with a silver skull and a black wooden compass.

I looked at the ‘Soul Compass’. “This has to be a trap.”

Panda looked at me from where he stood nearby, completely spotless. “Stop being so paranoid.”

“I’ll stop when it’s no longer beneficial,” I retorted stubbornly.

Bee pulled out the items she’d looted from the Scion and I did the same. We split the 600 Coins between us and began looking through all the items and what they did.

“Not to rush you or anything, but you are still bleeding,” Panda muttered.

“Is it going to kill me?”

“...No.”

“Then it can wait.”

“My Fiendblood Sickness already wore off,” Bee commented.

“This idiot still has twenty-eight minutes to go,” Panda said, jabbing his fingerless arm at me threateningly.

“Don’t make me toss you in the water.”

“That’s not water,” he replied.

Bee gagged loudly.

“*Inspect*,” I said, while holding the compass in my hand.

‘Soul Compass’ x
<i>“No ledge is powder, France is bacon.”</i> <i>- a dyslexic philosopher</i>
<i>By uttering the True Name of an Enemy, Boss, or Player, within your Region, the compass will point in their exact direction.</i>
<i>Charges: 3/3</i>
<i>Weight: 1 Panda</i>

“This has to be a trap,” I muttered.

The black wooden box had a round hole within which was a circular ring that always oriented itself North and a pointer that was spinning aimlessly.

Despite my doubts, I squeezed the compass and said, “Mayor Noah Sullivan.”

Instantly, the pointer spun around before settling on almost true West. There wasn’t really much to the west of the rich part of Castleburg, apart from some industrial buildings closer to the highway. The highway itself cut past the mountain forest on its northern side, before hitting Madeville. There wasn’t a distance indicator on the compass, but I had a bad feeling that we’d have to head towards Madeville to get this bastard.

“After we’ve found the Broadcast Nest, we’re going straight for the Mayor,” I said.

Panda looked around, trying to get his bearings. “Since your Benefactor message said *under* the Mansion, the Nest might be literally underneath, which means we have to follow the street down a bit and then go left.”

“Easier said than done,” Bee commented, holding the Sewer Map up in front of us. Just the area immediately around us had six different paths, dead-ends, and skull marks. It looked like a total pain in the ass to navigate.

‘Blank Sewer Map’ x
<i>You’re going to need this.</i>
<i>Displays a map of the sewers that is centered on your position and updates as you explore.</i>
<i>Don’t discard this. You won’t get a replacement.</i>
Weight: 2.5 Pandas

I opened it, only to see the same thing as what Bee had showed me.

“Let’s look through the rest of the stuff before we move on,” I decided, picking up the silver skull first.

“I hit level 14,” Bee said.

“It’s been so long since I leveled last,” I replied jealously. “But Brock is only one boss kill away from his next upgrade.”

“*Sweet as!!*” the balloon gauntlet exclaimed excitedly.

I inspected the skull, dreading what messed-up thing they’d ask me to do with it.

‘Silver Skull’ x
<i>“Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.”</i>
<i>The silver skull of a Red Scion. There is power within it, and, to unlock it, all you have to do is hold it aloft and gaze into its empty eye sockets.</i>
Weight: 1 Panda

Confused, and still slightly worried, I lifted it into the air and gazed into the dark holes where eyes would’ve been. The silver skull became like smoke in my hand and dissipated into the air within seconds.

“Phew,” I muttered, just as the next pop-up followed.

Choose your reward! x
<i>“There’s method in my madness.”</i>
<i>I bet you thought you’d have to violate the skull. But no, not this time. We try not to get on the bad sides of Absolutes y’see.</i>
Pick one of the options: ‘I_RULE’ ‘Silver Skeleton’ ‘Blood Claw’

“They’re quoting a lot,” Panda noted.

“Sounds like they’re afraid of the Flayed Queen.”

“Good. She’s crazy.”

“Crazier than Tina & Nina?”

“Let me put it this way: Tina looks like a law-abiding morally-wise paragon of virtue next to the Flayed Queen. And Tina is the scariest human I’ve ever met.”

“That’s quite an endorsement,” I muttered.

“I’m serious, Gambit, don’t fuck with the Flayed Queen.”

“Fine, if you say so.”

He frowned at my response, but I just ignored him and looked at the options I could pick between.

‘I_RULE’ x
<i>Ability</i>
<i>“Look at me, I am amazing!”</i>
<i>Become the center of attention for everyone around you, making them unable to turn away from your direction.</i>
<i>Duration: 1 minute</i>
<i>Cooldown: 20 minutes</i>

‘Silver Skeleton’ x

Passive

We didn't have any adamantium in storage, so you'll have to settle for silver.

Become highly-resistant to Crushing and Impact damage, at the expense of your body getting five times as heavy as normal, requiring a lot more Strength and Vitality to move around.

Warning: *by accepting this ability, you grant the GREAT GAME and its employees the right to repossess your skeleton after you die.*

‘Blood Claws’

x

Ability

I don't need a weapon. My body is my weapon.

Lose 5% of your health to coat your dominant hand in your own blood, which crystalizes into claws at the end of each finger, granting a high amount of bonus Slashing and Cutting damage. Disappears after a single attack.

All bloodborne illnesses in your body are transferred to your target on a successful attack.

Cooldown: *5 minutes*

After reading through them, I picked Silver Skeleton, without really giving it much thought. I immediately felt my weight increase manifold, the stone ledge I was seated on starting to crack as a result.

I moved my arms about and didn't feel like I'd have trouble with the extra weight, plus, my punches would hit so much harder now.

Before I could pick up the next item to inspect, a high-pitched screech echoed through the sewers.

“You might want to speed this up,” Panda advised.

“Do you think there are crocodiles down here?” Bee asked.