

## I'm never too old for this shit!

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# **I'm never too old for this shit!**

by [Brandschlag](#)

## Summary

Have you ever wondered how a middle-aged dude would fare after getting a 'Gamer System' thrown at him? Well, look no further! I'm 48 years old, my best friend's a cowardly dog and I'm spending my best years crawling dungeon for fun! Hah! Eat shit young'uns! I don't need no Gamer Body! I got my fists, and fuck choosing a class!

Multi-Crossover.

Story begins in our Earth.

Is now in: The Breaker (Manhwa) Universe.

## Notes

I'm a bit embarrassed by the summary, but this was requested by a reader on another platform and after hearing his idea, I felt obliged to write at least one chapter. If he likes it, there should be more to come, including a brief jumpchain through other fandoms.

If you happen to like this chapter, feel free to leave some feedback.

# Chapter 1

[Game Mode Enabled]

[Class Selection Available]

[Tutorial Unavailable]

[Dungeon: Kofun — 48 / 100 Guardians defeated]

[Bare Knuckle Damage Proficiency Increased]

I blink the information away and dive under a swing of my opponent's sword, sliding on the metal bracers I fastened to my leather trousers. Using the remaining motion I strain my muscles and tendons, and jump up. My fist connects squarely with brittle bone —

[Game Mode Enabled]

[Class Selection Available]

[Tutorial Unavailable]

[Dungeon: Kofun — 49 / 100 Guardians defeated]

[Bare Knuckle Damage Proficiency Increased]

The last remaining skeleton samurai of the tomb I set out to raid today falls (literally) headlessly to the ground. Two seconds later its jaw, cranium and broken fragments of the rest of the skull clutter down on the damp and mossy stone floor. The iron armor on its body crumbles into a heap of rust as whatever that preserved it until today falls away.

Completely out of breath, but happy with my success so far, I wipe my brow and look around the wide, but not all that tall room. I try to ignore the phantom twinge in my lower back, and the burning of my tendons as best as I can. I blink, and the intrusive popups in my field of view disappear.

Without choosing a class, the ‘Game System’ only offers me the bare minimum of benefits, such as a small boost in strength and agility. No stat gain, no real skills. But I am wired like that. I rather dislike the idea of not having grown the fruits of my labour m’self.

There are eight heaps of rust, and uncountable single pieces of bone laying around the room. Their swords, unlike the iron armor, are scattered around the room.



I dare not pick them up, lest the game decide I did select the class [Warrior] or one of the myriad of subclasses. No, not gonna happen.

I shake my head. “Of course there’s no other loot,” I grumble.

So far this dungeon is not paying off.

I bought the license to this dungeon off the [Market] the ‘Game System’ offers. It’s a summon scroll that, well, summons the dungeon, I guess.

There are multiple ranks to these scrolls, and the higher the ranking, the hardier and stronger the enemies inside, but also the better the loot.

It works in a nifty way, I have to say.

I buy the scroll, take it to where I want the dungeon to open, and pop the scroll. The dungeon will take on the surrounding characteristics, and fill it with enemies, based on the preset of the area.

Low ranked licenses, or summon scrolls if you will, are limited in their amount of enemies and therefore loot too. That in itself is not a problem. Loot cannot be sold anywhere except the [Market] of the ‘Game System’ anyways.

Higher ranked licenses can spawn easily triple the amount of enemies, and as mentioned they’ll be far harder to kill. In consequence their loot will always be better as the low ranking dungeons I am crawling.

I guess it’s meant as encouragement, to grow stronger, and to get more loot in a short period of time. But... I don’t want to? I enjoy raiding old tombs too much for that. I love the Indy Jones movies, so sue me.

Hence my being here in Japan, raiding my personal replica of the Mozu Tombs.

I whistle before squatting down. I pull my small backpack off my shoulder and get my bottle out. While I take a few drags of the lukewarm, lightly salted water, I watch my ol' friend Dusty, the ever-excited Border Collie bound out of his hiding place.

Despite getting in on the years, Dusty is as excitable as ever. He's in a fast trot, making his way from heap to heap, sniffing and pawing at the bones before finally moving on to me.

The smile on my face is a subconscious reflex by now as Dusty buries his snout in my hands, begging for attention. So what if he's a little coward in Dungeons? I was too, when this whole thing suddenly dropped on my life.

Ah, perhaps I should explain.

Y'see, I'm 48 years old, and I used to work as a ... I don't rightly know the proper English word to describe what I've been working as. Suffice to say, it was physical work and a lot of it, all right? Building houses, or sometimes even tearing 'em down in parts. You get the idea, right?

One day an apprentice that thought the Polier (foreman) was just out to bully him, did not secure a hammer to his belt the way he'd been taught and told. It dropped down the scaffold, ricocheting off various metal pieces, and then fell down on my head.

Now, as luck would have it, I had just taken off my helmet to phone my own foreman to ask for a quick visit because there were troubles brewing at my site, when the hammer hit me.

Luckily it was just a rubber mallet, and I am kinda thickheaded. Still, I went down and was out for a few seconds.

I came to be long before the ambulance and the emergency doctor arrived.

I did not complain when I was taken to the hospital, affixed with a neck brace and stabilized on a stretcher. Honestly speaking, even if I felt kinda all right, I thought it was prudence on their part. I had passed out, after all.

Well, to cut the long story of procedures and tests short: all they diagnosed me with was a rather large, and painful bump on the head, and a light concussion from hitting the ground when I passed out.

Not too bad for getting hit by a hammer, right? And I can't put the full blame on the apprentice. I should've known better than to take off my helmet.

Anyhoo.

The 'Game System'? Right, right! I'm getting to that.

I am kinda iffy on the details, but when I got home from the hospital, after a few days of observation under the tender care of nurse Dorothea — lovely woman, by the way. Bit of a brute, though — my elder sister was waiting for me. She held my keys and the leash of Dusty and was off before I could utter my thanks.

Yeah, my family and I never got along too well. I mean, we helped each other, begrudgingly, and more or less out of obligation, 'cause it was expected, but beyond that? Haven't talked a word with my mum in 6 years. Anyways, I'm getting off track here.

Now, as I opened the door to my apartment, Dusty dashed in, I sneezed violently, pulled something in my back, and the 'Game System' popped up right in my face like an intrusive advertisement begging me to disable my ad blocker.

Three fat popups.

[Game Mode Enabled]

[Class Selection Available]

[Tutorial Unavailable]

Strange coincidence, isn't it? Perhaps there's a correlation between these things, perhaps there is not. Perhaps there's a great fucking conspiracy in this world of people with back issues holding this knowledge of dungeons and 'Game Systems' hostage?! Yeah, haha, right. I mean, I don't know, and I bloody well hope none of y'all is gonna go trying to get hit by a rubber mallet now! What I do know, however, is that I suddenly was faced with a very interesting situation.

Yet somehow, as I saw these popups and browsed the [Classes] that suddenly were available to me, I found that these options... they were not appealing; they seemed generic.

Like a pre-planned adventure that had mapped out all the details, every single trap and encounter, or like when you enable the cheat console in a game, or start modding to get the most overpowered stats or weapons. That's no fun, right? Sure, for a while it will be entertaining, butchering everything that moves with the most overpowered skills, headshotting left and right, walking through walls, and all that. But for me, that stuff gets old real quick.

I'd rather not choose at all, than have to follow a predetermined path that this selection offered. In truth I much prefer doing things on my own, and with my own two hands. This is one of the reasons why I worked in construction.

And so I made my choice. I'd play this Game on my terms. I'd not become bound by a pre-set path that I'd be placed upon by choosing a class off the rooster the Game's system wishes me to select from. This would be my personal Adventure. My own choice!

Pathos done, I give Dusty one more quick scratch behind his ears before pushing the bottle back into my backpack, and standing up. I stretch, then adjust my belt, and the metal bracers I wear on legs and arms.

My old and reliable Casio wrist watch beeps. That's the first beep. I must get a move on.

Dungeons, like this one, only exist for a set period of time. There might be a way to prolong their duration as a class-related perk or whatever it is called; for example either the [Sorcerer] or [Arcane] might be able to do so, but seeing as how their skills can't be viewed before selecting the classes, I am not too keen to find out.

From my very first step into a dungeon, I knew that I do not want to be inside one, when the time frame of four hour closes.

For clarification: a dungeon exists in what might be a parallel world of my reality. Things do look very much the same down to the last speck of dirt in one place, but may suddenly change drastically in another.

In what way? Let me give an example.

My first encounter with a dungeon was the Aachen Cathedral.

I'm sure most people don't know her well enough, but I know her by heart. I worked for the facility manager during the summer break for almost seven years straight. I used to help clean before the tourists and visitors came, and I used to help around wherever needed, such as helping out the artisans that were frequently around, fixing smaller issues.

Now, what I'm saying is, I know this place inside out. I know its history.

And that is where the fun begins.

Y'see, Emperor Charlemagne is buried there. His simple throne stands proud for all the visitors to see. There are relics, almost a thousand years old, some older than the Cathedral herself.

So, when out of devilment I decided that this would be a good place to pop my first dungeon scroll, I was surprised to find myself standing inside a much changed Cathedral. There were thresholds, rooms and even whole chapels that did not exist in reality.

Now, what if I were to be inside such a place when the timer runs out?

Well, I tested what might happen.

I placed a candle on the threshold, and when the dungeon timer ran out, I was the proud owner of a fossilized piece of beeswax that had become part of a bluestone wall.

To return to the present: should I happen to be in the wrong place when the timer runs out... I guess death by sudden compression by a couple metric tons of dirt and stones is quite fast and painless. Hopefully. Maybe. Let's not find out, yeah? I rather like not being made of stone.

"C'mon Dusty," I say, picking up the pitch torch off the stone floor.

Half a moment later Dusty canters up on my right side. He speeds past me, but only as far as the shine of the torch reaches before coming back, and falling into step on my left.

"Good boy," I mutter.

The way ahead is a narrow path again, lower than the room from before.

Hearing the creaking and cracking of my knees as I get down on all fours, I swallow my protests and start crawling forward. I would not be uttering any words about being too old for

an adventure. May I be struck down where I stand when these words leave my mouth!

Swiping the pitch torch along the wall, I mark my way with soot and torch wax and turn left when the path turns out to be a Y-junction.

A quick glance behind me confirms that Dusty is happily following behind me, every so often having a quick sniff of something here and there.

In moments like this one, I regret not having padded the metal bracers with gel, or at least foam paddings. But there's no helping it *now*.

After a few minutes of crawling the space grows larger again, and I finally can get back onto my feet. I do so with a silent sigh of relief.

Some things in this room are different, though. For one, sand and dust crunches under my steps. Before, everything was damp stone and a thin layer of moss. There's more, though.

I can't really place the feeling at first, but the room seems far too big; despite the shine of my torch I can't see the walls, nor can I see the ceiling. It's as though something in the dark was swallowing the light.

But the dungeon does not wait for me to find my pair of balls — My wrist watch beeps again.

"Shit," I mutter.

Half my time's up. Just one more beep, then I must start back and my backpack's still empty of loot. The scroll cost me a third of my money. I need to at least get that money back or every future adventure will bring me closer to potentially having to invest real money.

Yeah, right. That's how I bought my first dungeon scroll. Sucks, doesn't it?

Roused by the sounds, dozens of pale blue orbs light up around the room, revealing rows of clay figures encircling the whole of the room. They all are staring down at us. Some of them shift, holding spears and other things I could not make out from the distance.

Yet they don't move, and I can make an educated guess as to why; I bet their legs are more or less one solid clump of clay. I saw that on Google, when I researched this place. That will make fighting them easier; but their spears sure look lethal enough.

I swallow hard and from next to me I hear the characteristically afraid whimper of my best friend and coward, Dusty. He'd find a good hiding place, I hope.

Though I am shaking a bit, I throw the torch into the middle of the room and get down on a knee, and refasten the laces of my working boots with quick and decisive movements. I pull my socks up as high as I can and then slap m'self in the face with both hands.

A shiver runs down my back and I feel a tad more ready than before. Yeah, I needed that.

I pluck the corded cable of my ear buds out of the buttonhole of my flannel shirt they are resting in and stuff them into my ears. Once I'm in the fray, I'd not be able to hear too much, but I enjoy the comforting idea of havin' a grind to some good music. It takes a bit of the edge that I might ... well, die? Yeah that. Not a pleasant thing to think 'about.

"All right!" I say, getting up. "Dusty? Hide!"

My dog knows the command. He dashes off with such speed that there's a bit of a dust cloud in his wake. He disappears back in the dark of the tunnel. Man, I hope he doesn't run too far and gets lost like he did back in the Aachen Cathedral.

I check my smartphone. How does Manowar with 'Hand of Doom' sound? To me it sounds perfect.



The music begins to play and I get a move on.

First I walk a few steps, then I break out into a jog that turns into a mad dash.

As soon as I pass a certain point the clay statues stir into a frenzy: spears are thrown, and stones sail at me as I approach. They are clumsy, but their sheer number would still mean danger.

I lunge to the side, dodging a spear that comes for my head. The pebbles I get hit by on consequence don't hurt that much.

I am forced to play this by the feel. The majority of functions of my user interface are locked and my health points don't update. Those are the perils of not choosing a class.

As I get closer I see the statues' faces are grotesque surfaces with three holes, making them almost look as though they are mocking me with haughty smiles. That gives the feeling of my fist smashing through the first terracotta heads all the more satisfaction.

[Game Mode Enabled]

[Class Selection Available]

[Tutorial Unavailable]

[Dungeon: Kofun — 50 / 100 Guardians defeated]

[Bare Knuckle Damage Proficiency Increased]

Blinking away the popup messages, I shake the holey clay-head off as I swing for the next head. My fist connects again, and I feel the terracotta head rip off the body and from the corner of my eyes see it fly off —

[Game Mode Enabled]

[Class Selection Available]

[Tutorial Unavailable]

[Dungeon: Kofun — 51 / 100 Guardians defeated]

[Bare Knuckle Damage Proficiency Increased]

By the second time I see these cancerous popups flood my vision, my brain begins to filter them, as all my senses are muted to the combat-necessary minimum. I know my heart is

going nineteen to the dozen, and my blood's now more or less just a mix of hormones that keep my body going for the fight, and nothing else, but somehow that's exactly what I enjoy.

Suddenly a spear appears from basically out of nowhere; I have to duck so abruptly, I feel phantom pain paralyse me from the hip downward for a second.

With a snarl I pull free hammers from my old tool belt and hurl them at the statues.

My aim's off a bit, but the hammerheads still smash through their clay heads and I bark a savage laugh when I see the clay shards spray away, and the statues go limp.

Then I free myself of the bad memory of pain and get moving.

After I can't tell ya how long they've run out of spears, waving their arms with impotent belligerence. Dio be thanked they don't have infinite projectiles like in most video games, and even more so, that they were brainless grunts that threw their spears rather than keeping them to lunge at me in close quarters.

From that point on, I tear through the terracotta army with my fists like damned Rocky Balboa was beating that cow half in the meat locker. There's no holding me back; they are helpless and their pummeling at me barely stops me. In the heat of the moment I don't feel much of the pain, and I am used to bruises.

When it's done I am standing alone amidst dozens of clay statues, heads and parts of torsos missing. Along the path I ran spears are sticking in the floor, or are laying on the ground.

I am breathing heavily, and I can feel every year of my age, but fuck me. That was fun.

I pull the ear buds out and stuff them carelessly back into their buttonhole before whistling for Dusty. He'd be antsy to return, I just know it.

Now that my heart is calming down and my head is somewhat clear, I realise there are multiple popups still waiting for me to pay attention. Of course. I wish this System had an adblock.

[Game Mode Enabled]

[Class Selection Available]

[Tutorial Unavailable]

[Dungeon: Kofun — 99 / 100 Guardians defeated]

[Bare Knuckle Damage Proficiency Increased]

One more ‘mob’, huh? That would probably be the boss, then.

All dungeons I’ve cleared had one, though usually they didn’t differ all too much in strength and such.

The only one that really stands out was in the Aachen Cathedral, when ‘lo and behold, Charlemagne himself climbed out of his tomb, stomped around like he owned the place (which I guess he kinda did?) and then went to sit on his throne.

Well to make a long story short: I punched him too; a great feeling, I gotta say.

I dismiss the popups and go over to pick up the pitch torch and the hammers that I can spot nearby.

After scarce a minute Dusty comes bounding out of the tunnel we came from originally.

I am staring at the wet, red skin on my knuckles; a thin strip of skin is peeled back.

Wow. I really need to learn a better way of punching things. Cause [Bare Knuckle Proficiency], whatever the hell that skill does, sure as hell does nothing to alleviate the repercussions of punching something coarse or hard.

“Good boy,” I praise when Dusty comes straight to me. I touch his head, briefly before moving on.

Holding the torch high above my head, I check the walls.

Each has a pathway, however only one leads to the ‘boss room’, so to speak. The other pathways would most likely be narrow tunnels like the one I came through earlier, leading back or ‘round.

The ‘Game System’ offers me no minimap, and as such I have to rely on the vague information I got off Google and my guesswork. That googled information and my belly says straight ahead; I don’t have the time to check every nook and cranny, and so straight ahead it is.

I set a quick pace, and hurry through the hallway. As luck would have it, it’s not low enough to force me to my knees, this time. I don’t think I have the time for another long-ass crawl. The torch is three quarters gone, and my time’s almost up.

After a few quick steps I come upon a room with a different air to it.

There are statues, unalive, with chalices of metal in their stumpy hands. Their clay heads (no faces this time) are bowed, and they are standing in rows, leading up to a rotten skeleton sitting in the most pristine, layered silk robes on an elevated wooden floor. Behind the podium-like structure were more things that lay in the dark.

After raising the torch as high as my arms allow for, I could make out the stitching of cranes on the fabric; it's hard to see, but poking out just below the left arm is the hilt of a sheathed blade. Looks expensive. Looks like loot!

The skeleton itself is... well. Calling it a mostly-rotted zombie, would say it best. There's what looks like bits of skin and ... bah, strings and tatters of flesh sticking to the bone. Its right arm and the lower half of the skull are just plain bones, with thin, dark hairs visibly clinging to the brittle and leathery skin on the skull.

While I hate skeletons and zombies with passion, usually only reserved for teenage romance flicks that involve sparkling vampires, I would bet all my non-existent loot that if the 'Game System' were to be developed by SquareEnix, Nobuo Uematsu would have found a suitable piece of composition for this chamber.

A whimper makes me glance to the side. Dusty stands with his tail between his legs, ears flat, cowering behind my legs. Poor boy.

I throw the torch between the statues, and feel my heart beginning to pound wildly again when the zombie stirs. First its arms twitch, and then more shaky movement trembles its other limbs. It looks as though getting back into motion after centuries of decaying stillstand takes more than a few moments.

I'll be damned if I let an advantage like this pass by unused!

"Hide Dusty!" I bark and immediately fall into a sprint just as my dog disappears in a cloud of dust and sand.

There's no time for big preparation if I want to make use of this chance.

I charge across the distance in nary a second, and with the motion of my swift arrival take a great swing with my trailing foot. The kick connects, though of terrible aim and practice, squarely with the right shoulder of the sitting body.

There is a terrific report, and surprise halts me. I didn't know prior that bone breaking outside of the confines of the flesh sounds so gunfire-like. Fuck me, that's knowledge I could live without.

The zombie, though, barely reacts. Its right shoulder is shattered and the arm lies a few steps in the distance. It moves to stand, and I scramble to take a few steps back, out of reach of that sword.

Standing at last, the zombie — who couldn't be anyone else but Emperor Nintoku himself — fingers its beard with the remaining hand, then makes a slashing gesture downward. His mandible moves —

I frown as an idea insists on floating through my head.

I-is — is he speaking? I can't tell! The zombie is missing lips, tongue, the majority of muscles and tendons to communicate. Hell, even its voice box is a rotten clump of meat, and I bet the stomach muscles are gone as well. How'd he put air through... Anyways! Now the mandible sort-of slipped off the maxilla and temporal bone and is holding on by a string of...

I try to repress the need to heave as he pushes it back into place with a crunch.

You can't make this shit up, seriously!

My heart beats a strange tune, torn between amusement and fight. It's a quick, tumbling sort of thing I can feel hammering in my chest, and I'd be laughing if it was any other situation.

I shift my stance when Nintoku goes on to grab the heft of his ornamental sword, and two of the earlier recovered hammers find their ways into my sweaty hands.

Nintoku pulls, and I can see the radius and ulna bones twist as the heft loosens slightly; then there's a crunching sound and the motion stops. The pulling becomes more fierce, yet the heft does not give.

I'd be a fool to pull a Goku and give my enemy the chance to grow stronger, or not make use of a clearly inconvenient situation.

*I can end this now*, I think as I grip my hammers on the lowest point of their handles. Just a few solid swings and Nintoku is done.

I'm not a fighter; I'm an uneducated brawler that only knows how to throw punches 'cause of all of them action movies I watched growing up. Big shout out to Bud Spencer, Jean-Claude Van Damme and Jackie Chan! But my hammers? Shit, I can hammer in any nail one strike.

There's that spark of resolve that makes me shiver with anticipation. I can do this!

I rush at Nintoku again, my hammers set to take his head off.

The first of my swings connects solidly with the skull. There's a crunching sound, much more hollow than the report before, and I let go when I find my hammer stuck in the hole it created. The skin seems like glue, clinging to the hammer tight.

Nintoku's eyeless skull swivels up to glare with empty sockets at me —

I can just feel the malice.



*Fuck*, is the only thought I have on my mind when I twist around and try to connect my right handed hammer with the side of Nintoku's skull.

I see him let go of his sword the moment the broad side of the hammer connects with his skull —

His rotting hand shoots up to my throat in an instant, and he plucks me off the ground and up into the air as though I weigh nothing at all.

It happens so fast and with such ease that the surprise disappears before it can set in. I feel a heat pulse prickle and spread from where his rotting flesh clamps down around my throat. It floods my head and there are blinking bright and dark spots beginning to fill my vision.

As I try to fight back, kicking and pummeling at him, Nintoku's maw flaps low, and a blackish something swells, swirling in it with ferocity. As soon as I spot it, it unloads at me —

A fierce screech rends the air, and I feel the pressure in my head double before a sudden motion shakes my limbs and a brief touch of wind cools my face. Then it hurts, and coarse sand bites into my skin.

Okay, *ouch*! Being thrown to the ground hurts, but I have no time to dwell on this shit. I gulp quick and shallow breaths down; as my vision clears off the dark spots, I see the torch almost in reach. I feel hot sticky wetness run down from every orifice my head offers.

On all fours, I scramble towards the torch, pick it up and rip it around, throwing it at the zombie.

My aim is off, still, somehow by dint of effort, not skill, the torch lands on the hem of the voluptuous silk robes the zombie emperor is wearing.

It takes two steps of the zombie for the hem of his robes to be lit alight with hungry flames.

The silk shrivels up and the air fills with a nauseating blend of smells as the fire climbs higher and higher.

Nintoku barely offers the flames eating at him more than an iota of his attention while he lurches towards me.

I scramble to my feet and back away to behind the statue closest to me, watching with a mix of emotions how the fire is now encasing the zombie whole, blackened remains of the silk robe breaking off with every step toward me.

It doesn't take long and the fire is almost gone; only around the thick layers of robe on the shoulders and neck still flames are dancing with delight.

In reaction to me gaining distance, Nintoku's maw flaps open again. The halo of fire makes the pool of pitch black light that begins to spin all the more threatening —

The fire licks at the dry skin, and I can hear a crunching sound as the tendons that hold the mandible shrivel up, then tear off and I see how the pool of black begins to spill uncontrollably.

Jumping to the side, I dodge out of harm's way and make a mad lunge at the zombie. I bodycheck him with all I have, a solid 85 kilograms and that bullhead on my shoulders.

Both of us are thrown into the dirt, but I know I don't have the luxury of time to recover because a zombie has no need to recover either.

My hands grip the remaining arm and rip at it with all the force I can muster from my prone position. But it's no use, all my pulling is doing is tearing the jello-like flesh off the bones.

Instead I twist around, leverage and press down my legs on the rising zombie and pull with all I've got. My grip slips as the flesh moves under my grip, but ultimately the arm gives and with a disgusting squelching and popping it tears free.

I let go mid-motion and scramble to get to my feet, but again there's no time for a breather: Nintoku is about to get up despite physics telling me he shouldn't be able to —

I lunge out and kick at his head. My work boot connects, steel toe-cap first and there's a crunch as the head rips off of the spine and the tread of the rubber sole pulls free stringy bits and things, clinging to the shoe.

The head tumbles; Nintoku's body twitches, then falls still without any further theatrics.

But fuck that! I've seen too many horror movies in my youth: I dash after the rolling head, jump up as I approach and land with both my feet smashing the skull flat with a huge popping crunch.

Fucking take *that* you ruddy zombie!

[Game Mode Enabled]

[Class Selection Available]

[Tutorial Unavailable]



[Dungeon: Kofun — 100 / 100 Guardians defeated]

[Dungeon Objective: Defeat 'Nintoku, The Endless Emperor' Complete]

[Rewards Unavailable]

I step off Nintoku's shattered skull and take a deep breath.

“And stay down!” I mutter, then throw up, and I heave until I feel like the next thing that's gonna come up is the entirety of my very angry guts. *Urgh*.

I spit the sour taste out and glare at the dead still, headless zombie. I give him another kick before making an attempt to whistle.

I don't quite get the sound out right, but distantly I can hear the pounding of paws anyways.

My hand reaches up and brushes against numb lips. I feel around some more and find that the whole of my face is burning. I wipe at the sticky mess I can feel clinging to my skin, and my hand comes off red, sand and other things mixed in. I don't know what to feel at seeing it, except: *ouch*.

But I have to remember that I don't have the time to contemplate things *now*! I need to hurry my sorry, hurting ass up and get done with things.

Without waiting for my dog to arrive, I hurry to the remaining torch flickering with barely alive flame, throw my backpack on the floor and pull out another one. Once I got the second

one burning, I make way to the area behind the podium. The grin I am sporting is well deserved, in my opinion.

Where before it was completely dark from my point of view, now I could make out a row of low tables and shelf-like constructs. Some of them seem to be holding up quite well, others not so much.

But what catches my eye sits at the center.

There, resting on a moldy heap of fabric sits a small wooden strongbox. It looks distinctively Japanese in design, and might have been lacquered at some point. The dark wood is a good indication, at any rate. What I am trying to say here: it looks like something only a wealthy person could have afforded and now is about to fall apart.

On the walls, and the shelves I can see a selection of moldy masks, watching over the room, and there are a few small stone braziers filled with bits of damp ash.

I glance at Dusty and find him sniffing around the room, doggish curiosity and all.

A breath of relief leaves me; though I know, thanks to the counter provided by the 'Game System' that all enemies have been slain, Dusty's carefree attitude sets me more at ease than anything else.

But there's sod all time for that now. I hurry over and push the surprisingly heavy lid of the strongbox open.

Inside, two bonewhite tubes wait sitting on almost well preserved silky fabric. On closer inspection I find they have carvings, and seem not made of bone but maybe horn, ivory or something like that. One has wavelike forms, and a mountain shape carved on it, the other clouds and something I can't make out.

The symbolism eludes me. Cultural differences, and the fact that I'm not the smartest tool in the shed... Yeah, well. Whatever. I can just google the details later!

I decide to get both at the same time, lest there be some traps or something.

I've seen Indy Jones often enough! Never give some strange mechanism of an ancient culture a good chance at killing you. Preferably never give them *any* chance either, but well, a poor bugger like me can't resist the temptation of loot.

With care I close my fingers and —

[HIDDEN REWARD]

[CLASS: MARTIAL NOVICE]

[CLASS SELECTION CONFIRMED]

[USER INTERFACE UNLOCKED]

[TUTORIAL AVAILABLE]



♪♪♪♪♪[CONGRATULATIONS]♪♪♪♪♪

There's even a fucking celebratory chime! Fucking bullshit!

I howl with rage just as the [User Interface] becomes available.

“NO — “ I drag the word out as far as I can, and Dusty picks up, howling like a loon.

While the echo of my anger trails off, Dusty goes strong. He usually never howls, but I guess after the stress I put him through today, he's earned it.

“NO!” I repeat and feel like throwing the scrolls on the floor.

The idea of throwing a hissy fit is so damn tempting. I look at the bonewhite tubes, and you know what? Fuck this! Fuck! Fuck! Fuck! Fuck this!

I throw them on the floor with force, and watch with great satisfaction how the fragile outside breaks and jumps apart into almost clean-cut halves.

Said satisfaction is short lived, as I regret the decision momentarily upon watching the tube's contents, scrolls made of what could only be (very sensitive) rice paper roll through the dirt.

I growl as I throw my backpack on the ground. Damaged loot gives less money!

“Stupid!” I mutter while I rummage around in my backpack. “Stupid! Stupid! Stupid!”

Before I can get anymore upset with myself, I find what I am looking for: the bento box I bought earlier at the souvenir shop before heading into the tourist section where I summoned the dungeon.

While I am usually quite amazed at the neatness of these bento boxes, right now I don't have a mind for it. I wriggle the rubber band off the box and free the bamboo chopsticks from their siamese twinship and put them on the ground.

After picking the shards of the outer tube off the remaining scroll of rice paper, I proceed to carefully push the scroll backwards until most of it is coiled up fully. A great success, insofar as nothing is any more broken afterwards, and I didn't ruin the rice paper with my sweaty and bloodied hands.

I pick up the shards and use them to 'spoon' the (very, very sensitive) rice paper scrolls, and reach for the rubber band when —

"Dusty? No!" I say when my faithful dog returns to my side to figure out what the heck I am doing, kneeling on the floor.

He looks at me, head tilting in a most curious manner. He sniffs, looks from me to the scroll, then back at me, and wags his tail. A playful *woof* follows.

My wrist watch beeps and promptly the stressful panic I was able to blend out until now returns to me, sending my heart hammering a wild staccato, and my hands to gain back their nervous tremble.

I hastily push the shards together, while Dusty chooses that very moment to push the scrolls with his dirty, wet nose.

The shards slip out of place, I try to push Dusty away, the rice paper touches my hand, I feel it crumble beneath it and —

[SKILLS ADDED]
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I howl again, defeat slumping my shoulders.

Dusty doesn't care, being a good boy and all. He pushes at my hands with his nose when I don't pay him the attention he wants.

Y'know what? I don't fucking care anymore. Today fucking sucks.

And since I am in a foul mood, it's best to get the loot situation sorted out now.

"Open [Store]," I say, making sure my pronunciation is on point and promptly the relevant window appears.

It's a quite simple design inspired by practicality. On the top, three tabs offer [Buy], [Sell] and [Repurchase], while on the left, tabs allow for a sorting based on various categories.

After swapping to the [Sell] tab I start chucking everything that is not nailed down more or less carelessly at the window. So what if the price goes down, I'm done, I don't care.

The shards of the broken tube, the bits of rice paper. For a brief moment I consider the strongbox as well, but after a tentative attempt to lift it, I think better. Shit's far too heavy to lift. But the masks are fair game.

Everything disappears without any visual effect, but I hear a faint ka-ching, reminding me of the sound one of those old cash registers make whenever something enters the [Store].

Hearing the sound of money is almost as good as seeing said money increase.

As soon as that's done I get the pitch torch and then jog off.

I don't need to call for my dog; Dusty is hot on my heels, and he seems to be enjoying the quick tempo far more than I do.

For me, every breath hurts, and I feel like I'm not gonna be doing anything but wallowing in muscle ache for the next week come morning but my mind is so filled with annoyance that I just power through, ignoring everything.

The way back takes no time at all. Having cleared off all enemies, and jogging and crawling on auto-pilot while I stew on my cockup does that. Great way to pass time, being angry and trying to ignore how everything hurts, would recommend it to anyone I hate.

After passing one sword, stuck in the floor, I grumble, before starting to swipe all other swords I encounter off the floor as I jog through the rooms and chuck them into the [Store].

Don't have to worry over class selection anymore. Shit— No, no! I gotta start seeing things in a positive light: I now have loot, and loot means more selection of dungeon scrolls, which mean better adventures.

Yes, let's keep looking at the bright side of things.

Having a class now means I'll be able to access the full range of functions the 'Game System' offers. I'll be able to see my health displayed in the form of a health bar. I'll be able to ... I'll be able to... You know? I really don't know enough about what I can do now.

Once I reach the area in which I appeared in, I check for time and find that I have a few seconds left.

I focus on the corner of my vision where I find one of the windows I dismissed earlier.

I swipe at it, and promptly find a popup appear in the middle of my field of vision.

[TUTORIAL AVAILABLE]

“Guess it would be prudent to learn more about how this works,” I say aloud, in an attempt to convince myself.

Dusty looks at me, clearly curious.

“Hm? Whaddya say, Dusty?”

Tentatively his tail begins to wag and he trots over to me. I leash him.

“That’s a ‘yes’?” I ask, full of faux-enthusiasm.

Dusty picks up on that, and the wagging intensifies.

It’s a tad unfair of me, since dogs will always react to a certain pitch of tone with happy tail wagging.

“If *you* want it that much — Fiiiine!”

I press my finger to the popup. There is no tactile response, but the popup pops nonetheless.

A shudder runs down my back.

Sometimes I wish that someone would smack me real hard whenever I do something exceedingly stupid.

[TUTORIAL INITIATED]

[TUTORIAL SERVER SELECTED]

[TRANSITION INITIATED]

I deserve a few such smacks right now, I think.

There's an overwhelmingly loud popping sound in my head. It's so loud, in fact, that I begin to see bright light. It's everywhere, and only the tight grip I have on Dusty's leash keeps me from freaking out.

## Chapter 2

### Chapter Notes

Soooo, seems the chapter was well enjoyed by the person who requested it, and thus I'm going to write a new chapter every now and then. I was strictly told not to stress about it, and to make it a fun ride, nothing too serious. So that's that.

In one moment all I see is bright whiteness, the next it's gone and I see dancing green and yellow lights and afterimages blurring my vision in such a way that I feel dizzy, as though I'm trying to keep my balance on a trampoline while someone else is jumping on it.

While rubbing my eyes free of the bright blinking things I see, a sudden loud sound makes me flinch. It's a car horn from the sound of it, and very damned close. While pulling at the leash in my hand to get Dusty out of harm's way, I squint at my surroundings.

My vision begins to clear, and oh yeah, I'm standing on a road. In front of me is a small line of cars, and while I can't see the people inside owed to the sun glaring from behind me down on the windshields, I'm sure they are annoyed. I'd be, for sure if someone decided to stand in front of my car, blocking the way without a care in the world.

The car horn blares again, and I wince. "Sorry," I offer, waving my hand. "Sorry!"

[TUTORIAL SERVER]

[Welcome to the Tutorial]

Again with that annoying chime... Thank you, system, and fuck you too.

Once I am on the pedestrian way and the short traffic jam moved along, I get down on one knee to make sure that Dusty is all right. But my fear of seeing him confounded is, well, unfounded. He's happily panting with his tongue lolling out of his snout, a bit dirty and there are smears of red all over his fur where I touched him, but overall he seems fine.

"Good boy," I praise before getting back up, knees cracking and crunching. Dusty responds with a soft bark, making a playful jump at me.

But I ignore the invitation to play in favor of finally taking note of that one thing that should have been bothering the moment I could see clearly: every store sign, every billboard and every little text on papers and walls I can see is written in some strange script; an odd dozen of lines per single symbol. It's probably Chinese – no wait, that's Korean! Korean has more straight lines, I remember that from Wikipedia articles!

*Well, I think, there's weird like fighting a skeleton in a dungeon, and then there's weird like this.*

Frankly, I don't know what's more strange, but it is what it is, and I roll with the punches. I have to stay positive, and if my face has a little twitch, then I'll blame it on my exhaustion.

Re-shouldering my backpack, I cast another glance around me without discovering any more that could tell me where exactly I am. Then however I realize the pedestrians who are staring at me, some in passing, others having taken to stop where they go.

*Oh*, I think as I realize that I must still be bloodied from my most recent encounter, and most probably altogether look like I was put through the ringer, and that is speaking aside of my general getup. I expect, to them I looked like as though Indie Jones was a construction worker, or is it the other way around? Whatever, not important. I'm drawing eyes, and there are bewildered frowns and pointed fingers.

Before I can decide in which direction to make my escape from the stares, I am approached by a teenager; his right arm, wrapped in cast and bandages is jutting out from underneath his unbuttoned shirt, revealing pale skin stretching tight over muscles. Skinny fit is the term that would describe him best, I guess, or as my grandmother used to say: underfed.

He comes to a halt before me, eyes open wide as he sees me up close.

I'm not quite sure what to say, because clearly he's expecting something, but there's no need to haw and hem, as Dusty yips a friendly bark and the young man standing before me breaks out of his observation.

"Hello Mister," he says with a barely there accent.

Right as he begins to speak, one of those accursed popups appears in my field of vision, blocking my sight and stealing my attention from whatever else the young man was saying; I might be looking a bit cross-eyed, as well, I think.

[Tutorial: Please note that should your health drop to zero, the Tutorial ends.]

So... then I go back, right? Confirmation please?

[Tutorial: Even a prodigy starts out like a common novice.]

Well.. that's no confirmation. No dying then, wasn't planning to, anyway.

[Tutorial: Please say *open* [Menu].]

The third of the popups blinks insistently at me, but no, I can't be arsed to do that now, standing here in public, even if this is some sort of other world, or server, or whatever.

I blink and the information disappears, though it's still lurking up there, in the corner of my peripheral vision like an especially fiendish mosquito, waiting for me to let down my guard.

The young man is waiting for an answer, I realize, but luckily Dusty reacts before I can, giving a low *woof*, sniffing and wagging his tail as he scoots as close to the young man as he can without leaving my side, his butt still firmly planted on the ground.

Cottoning on to the fact that my best friend is a bit of an attention hog-dog (hehe), the – and I really need to get more creative with naming people – young man bends down and holds his hand out for Dusty to sniff as he speaks in his native tongue, voice pitching high as he then proceeds to pet him.

"Ah," I say smartly, scratching at my dirty, bruised cheek. "Yeah, hi there."

Getting up from his squat, the young man has a slight flush of red creep into his face. "Are you all right?" He gestures to my face, face crunching up in concentration as he articulates himself in English. "Do you need help? Ambulance?"

As I give my reply, that no I do not need an ambulance, but his help is appreciated and I'd like to ask for directions to a motel, *thankyouverymuch*, a veritable holler drowns me out.

The young man seizes up with a jolt and glances over his shoulder. A lone drop of sweat seems to suddenly run down the side of his head. All right then, comic-physics, all right.

Another young man comes running toward him, covering the distance between where he emerged from around a corner and us in a surprising burst of speed. He begins to tear into the young man in front of me with a certain type of exasperation, from the synergy between them, and the gestures and such, not that I'm actually understanding, mind you —

[Tutorial: Translation available. Please say *open* [Menu].

I breathe out my sigh of resignation and mumble the keyphrase while nobody seems to be paying any particular attention to myself, but rather to the energetic teenager couple before me.

A feeling reminding of the sound I remember dropping metal cutlery into an expensive porcelain bowl makes echoes in my mind as the popup clears away and the [Menu] appears.

It's a very traditional, simplistic menu, listing the greyed out options [Logout] and [Server Selection], and the regular options [Settings], [Store] and [Skills]. It irks be a bit that the settings aren't in in their traditional order, but there's nothing I can do about that, and let's not even talk about what the heck *Logout* means, all right?

I ignore any other popup that appears and quickly open [Settings], followed by [General] and there, after some skimming over the few options available, find what I am looking for.

Once enabled, I blink the [Menu] away, and notice how a black text begins to pool into my vision like ink moves in water. It wavers, moves, ebbs and flows, and then forms actual letters that I can read, changing as quickly as the young woman in front of me is speaking.

Just as I begin to get a grasp on the ongoing conversation, Dusty seems to have decided that he went for long enough without any attention from any of the people present, prodding my

hand with his wet snout.

Absently, I pet his head and try to keep up with the subtitles just as a new popup appears.

[Tutorial: Class Introduction.]

*Oh c'mon!* Let me focus here, yeah? What did it read? A gang? What culture? Either the translation is on par with Google Machine Translations, or I'm missing a lot of context here. Okay, whatever, let's just go with the flow.

Slightly more agitated than before, the young man gestures to me with his healthy arm.

"See Jang? He's a tourist, and hurt! I couldn't just —"

The other young man rubs a hand down his face, sighing as he interrupts. "Yes Lee Shi-Wun, you couldn't just let him be."

Names! Hah, but... no idea how to pronounce them. Their chat is a bit too fast for me to parse out words in relation to what I'm reading.

I sigh audibly as I rub at my head, drawing both their eyes to me. I gesture, one hand holding the leash, the other a bit red and wet. "I'm fine, mostly. Could you just call me a taxi, or show me to the next hotel?" I say and realize that I don't exactly inspire confidence with my words, while I'm apparently leaking blood, still.

They share a look that probably carries an unspoken conversation that I'm too foreign to grasp, but probably boils down to "Aight? Aight! Let's help that idiot foreigner" and nod, though one more reluctantly than the other.

Small victories, and all that.

"This way Mister," the one I can now identify as Lee Shi-Wun says, gesturing with his hand down the sidewalk.

I nod, saying, "C'mon Dusty, we got places to be."

As I am led through a small maze of pretty neat roads, alleys and whatnot, finding myself impressed with the cleanliness and immaculacy of the constructions, that line of thinking leads me back to questions like *Where Am I?* and *What the fuck?!* Mostly the latter, though.

While I rubberneck like a tourist (and in all fairness, I am one), which my two companions do take duly note of, I can see their glances, their awkward and hushed bursts of whispers. The translation doesn't fail me either. I'd be suspicious of myself too, if I wasn't me. But thank fuck I'm me.

As we walk, passing by an odd dozen of food stalls, and probably the ninth store selling all kinds of probably super sugary drinks, I'm suddenly very aware of my own hunger and thirst, and Dusty too, if his longing look to a bowl of water placed before a 7-Eleven is any indication.



Might as well, no?

"Err, lads?" I say smartly, causing my companions to look at me. "Mind if we have a quick stop over there? Dusty — " I receive confused looks "— that's my dog, by the way. He's thirsty."

They look at each other, one shrugging, the other nodding.

"Won't take a minute," I promise, gesturing toward the store.

Upon arriving, Dusty remembers his training; he glances up at me, and I give him the *go*. Promptly he begins to lap up the water from the bowl with cute little black & white doggos on it. Same as my ol' buddy.

The taller – Jang, I remind myself – of the two stays with me as Lee Shi-Wun disappears inside the 7-Eleven. I take the chance to pull the (now slightly dented) camping bottle out my backpack, quenching my own thirst with a few measured gulps.

"Where from?" Jang asks, trying to sound friendly, but his constipated look doesn't really hold up to that attitude.

"I'm from Germany," I reply, scratching at my bloody cheek. "Though I lived and worked in the Netherlands for a while, too."

"Oh! Germany?!" Jang gushed, suddenly excited. "I like German car!"

That startles a small smile out of me as I glance at my hand, where dried flakes of blood cling to my fingers. *Urgh*. Come on here Dusty, let me pet you a bit —

We continue our stilted conversation with the topics lingering mostly around cars, and though I can't put much claim into being very knowledgeable on the topic, I at least can confirm that indeed, German Autobahn has (for the most part) no speed limit, and there's options for renting fast cars just for tourists.

A few minutes (at most!) later, Lee Shi-Wun returns. He's holding a small plastic bag, raising it towards us as he walks over.

"For you Mister," he says then, holding it out to me.

Man shucks, he's got me there. I rather dislike receiving benefactions, gifts, presents or whatever else you would like to call it. It makes me feel uneasy, partially because I don't know what I did to deserve it, because I think I need to earn such positive attention, and partially because I'm highly suspicious of people acting out of pure goodwill.

I know, it's a terrible trait, and expecting evil intentions to lurk around every corner, and in every person can only lead to burning bridges and becoming a social recluse, but it's so damn hard to unlearn.

Awkwardly, I receive the bag and glimpse inside. There are two packs of what I think are tissues, though one is sealed, and a small bottle of sanitizer, from the looks of it.

Dang, kid. Way to be generous to a stranger.

"Thank you," I say, forcing myself to be the grown-up I ought to be —

Suddenly another teenager comes running; he's wearing a black and white tracksuit with stripes ... I don't know, and I am not saying this with a racist intention, but he reminds me of those Slavs in their Adidas training suits. He's got a badly shaven head, and the attitude of one of these gopnik, my mind somehow tries to relate him to. Guess it makes sense, he'd just need a large plastic bottle or can of beer and he'd fight right in!

He comes to a halt before us, breathing somewhat hard from his run. But that doesn't stop him from pointing his finger at Lee Shi-Wun and shouting.

"There you are, bastard! I thought you already left!"

Lee Shi-Wun's eyes went wide.

"It's him," exclaimed Jang, finger pointing at the new arrival. "He's the one that attacked our school's best fighter!"

"What?"

A strange, almost mocking laugh leaves the new arrival before he smirks. "Long time no see. I heard a funny story. You are supposed to be the former disciple of *our* Master."

I miss part of the conversation that follows as I stow the contents of the bag I was gifted in my backpack; though what turns out to be wet wipes, I keep on hand. Can't just walk around looking like I went twelve rounds with a pack of sandpaper, now, can I?

The conversation is still heated and I feel it's not my place to interfere in their teenage quarrel; looking up just in time to catch the latest translation before it dissolves back into swirly-swirls of ink, I see figurative shit hit the figurative fan.

"I've been waiting to pay you back for last time for a long while now!"

Lee Shi-Wun sizes up at that exclamation.

"Don't worry! If you die, I'll take good care of that girlfriend of yours," says the gopnik, taunt evident in the wording. "I'll show it to you too... The punch that I learned from Master!"

"He won't fight you!" interjects Jang. "His arm is broken! He won't be your opponent at all! Besides, are you crazy? There's a foreigner watching!"

But Lee Shi-Wun, looking quite serious suddenly, speaks over his friend. "Whatever happens, Chang-Ho, I will never be afraid of you again!"

Oh boy, suddenly the thin, stick-in-the-wind kid gives off maincharacter vibes!

The figurative fan spins and spins, and round it goes, and the shit is flung and —

The gopnik explodes forward, arm drawn back and fist balled, and within a heartbeat he's past Jang and about to hit Lee Shi-Wun.

It's an amateur move, even I can tell as much with my limited experience from dungeon delving and adventuring. There's so much shit that can go wrong between starting it out and feeling the skin on your knuckles connect with your target while you sock them right good. Has happened to me a few times until I learnt to stop doing it; and let me tell you, it's exceedingly awkward, getting your fists dodged by slow ass skeletons or zombies, because they got more brain than I do.

And here, too, it doesn't work: Jang, jumping into his back, pushes him away from his target.

The gopnik breaks the fall with his face, shouting bloody murder as he gets up.

"Run!" Jang yells at Lee Shi-Wun, who having the presence of mind to find objection, pointing at me, seems dead-set to slug this issue out here and now, all the while his body is looking ready to run.

"Go," I say, spurring him out of his inner conflict.

Before my young friend can object any more, I whistle and break into as fast a jog as my beaten body allows for.

The sound leaving my lips draws Dusty's attention, and seeing me move has him break into a mad dash, following after me and then with the ease of a Border Collie, past me until he settles between me and my two young friends.

Frankly speaking, I have no idea what exactly is going on here, and why apparently it seems acceptable to this gopnik to have a fight in daylight AND public, but hey, maybe that's just me being an old-ass man in a foreign country. In my youth, we duked out our problems after school, and shook hands afterwards, no hard feelings.

There's some shouting going on between Jang & Lee Shi-Wun, but my multi-tasking isn't exactly all that great, so I miss most of the context, but that isn't exactly all that important, because as we turn out of the backstreet with the 7-Eleven in it, into a wider street with cars parked on both sides and electronic advertising panels in front of stores every now and then, something draws my eyes: a bunch of guys, wearing full body skeleton jumpsuits.

Now that ain't all that normal, either!

Jang and Lee Shi-Wun slow down, having spotted them as well.

"Ah~~ now I remember you!" I read just as a voice speaks up from behind us.

Turning his head, I see Jang sweating bullets as he states the obvious. "Shit, we're surrounded."

"You are the bastard who was butting in last time. You and that other bastard. I wanted to beat the shit out of both you ever since." The gopnik laughs his strange laugh. "No matter, I'll get him next."

I'm a bit startled by the rash reaction this draws from Jang, who, suddenly full of fire, draws himself up in clear outrage as he speaks. "The fuck, man?! Do you even know who you are talking about?! He's Chundomoon's successor, Hyuk So-Chun!"

Whatever have I stumbled into here? Honestly, put me into a dungeon any time, face off against the undead, raid ancient tombs and whatnot, I don't mind. But this here? Teenage drama? Fuck that noise.

"Blah blah blah," the gopnik finally says, and lurches forward.

His strike is as predictable as the first one, and Jang blocks it with his bag, no issues.

"I'm sorry Mister," says Lee Shi-Wun from the side. "I'm sorry I dragged you into this. Please leave. I will take responsibility."

I sigh. "Kid," I say, "I don't even know what the heck is going on. But that isn't important right now —"

Before I can fabulate anything else, I see my curious dog attempt to take a whiff of our attacker. Slapping my thigh hard, I give a sharp whistle. "Heel, Dusty!"

My call draws the attention of the Slav while Dusty hurries to obey my command as I trained him to do. He lets off from Jang, who takes the opportunity to gain distance, looks at me, then at my dog and grins. It's a cruel rictus that leaves no room to guess as to the *why*.

What follows, happens in a drawn out manner; the way his torso moves: arms and shoulders shifting with the movement of his hips as his leg is drawn back —

A popup appears as I realize what he's about to do.

[Tutorial: Class Introduction — Skills, Tutorial Mode]

"No," a growl escapes me. "No, you fucking don't."

[Tutorial: Skill demonstration commences automatically in combat situation.]

With speed belying my age, and sudden power and velocity not trained for, my body surges forward and covers the distance between us in the brief moment it takes him to aim his kick at my bolting dog.

"*Mister?!!*"

The Slav's eyes get wide when I'm suddenly in his face; but no matter how much I feel the need to drive my fist into his face for the mere attempt at hurting Dusty and to show him what a solid punch means, my body won't obey.

Instead, my hands straighten before taking position in an defensive way before me, and my body takes a step forward. Before I can grasp what's happening, the sole of my working boots pushes down on the kick and my hands move forward, giving a mighty push with the flat of their palms.

Being probably about as surprised as I am, the Slav doesn't react. He's pushed back, arms rowing for purchase, stumbling and finally falling onto his ass with enough oomph behind that he's gonna feel that for the next couple weeks whenever he wants to sit down.

I blink away three popups detailing the skills that were used and stare down at my hands as though seeing them for the first time. What the fuck's going on? I totally lost control over my body to —

Catching a glimpse of movement I realize that this ain't the place to think heavy thoughts.

For a second I entertain the thought of making myself scarce, but then I think better. This little shitstain almost kicked my beloved dog — my best fucking friend. No fucking way.

I take a step toward him and feel a certain amount of satisfaction upon seeing him look wary.

Squatting down, I point at him. "Never try to touch my dog again. Capiche? Or I'll make you wish you wore diapers that day!"

No idea whether he's got the message, but for his sake, I hope it.

"Mister!"

Doing a dumb thing, I glance over my shoulder to see Lee Shi-Wun running toward us.

I see his eyes widen; then, in a blitz of movement that makes it look as though he disappeared for a brief moment, he's next to me and his fist connects solidly with the Slav's head, sending him tumbling.

"Coward wanted to kick you!" Lee Shi-Wun declares, sweat pearling down his face.

He curses in his native tongue upon seeing the skeleton jumpsuits sprinting towards us.  
"Shit!"

Thanks translation.

"Sorry Mister!"

And off he runs.

"Hold it right there, you bastard!"

The gopnik, looking dazed, is standing. After shaking his head he takes chase.

"Oi!" yells Jang from behind me as the skeleton band hauls ass after Lee Shi-Wun; I can feel their eyes on me as they pass us by, and I bet they'd enjoy nothing more than to throw fists too. But they don't.

Man, for real. What the fuck? I'm missing so much of what's going on here. This isn't even funny anymore.

I whistle, claws click on asphalt and a few moments later Dusty appears next to me.

That's when I finally take note of the pain I'm in. A glance at my health bar shows that I lost a few percent, but nothing major. Yeah, no. Whatever. I won't even try to make sense of this. Tutorial my ass. Nothing is explained! Nothing!

"Hey Jang?" I say, and wince as I try to take a step.

He looks at me, sweaty and probably equally as fed up with today as I am.

"I think I'd prefer a hospital over a hotel now."

He nods but then looks at me shwredly. "You moorim?"

Translation, please?

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