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CARL'S DOOMSDAY SCENARIO

DUNGEON CRAWLER CARL BOOK TWO

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CARL'S DOOMSDAY SCENARIO



WELCOME, CRAWLER, TO THE THIRD FLOOR.

**THE PREVIOUS LEVEL WILL COLLAPSE IN 3 HOURS AND
35 MINUTES.**

WE TELEPORTED STRAIGHT FROM THE GREENROOM TO A LONG golden hallway reminiscent of the first hallway we had entered.

“Carl, look! We’re outside!” Donut said, looking up into the air. Next to her, Mongo gave an uncertain squawk.

Sure enough, a dark sky rose above us, dotted with stars. A colorful nebula, reminiscent of the background image on Odette’s stage, covered the sky.

The air still felt stale. I pulled my slingshot, aimed it at the stars, and I fired.

Plink. Sure enough, the rock bounced off the ceiling, about 25 feet up.

“It’s an illusion,” I said. “It’s like that mall in Las Vegas. They make it look like you’re outside, but you’re really not.”

“Well, that’s disappointing,” Donut said.

The walls and the ground were made of golden-colored bricks. A plush red carpet led to a familiar door at the end of the hallway. As we approached, the door opened on its own. A tall figure stepped out, and all three of us stopped.

A well-built, young, and disgustingly handsome man wearing a tuxedo waited for us. His skin was a dusky gray, and he had a short pair of devil horns jutting from his forehead. The man stood about my height, and he had long gray-and-black hair that was held back

in a ponytail. A barbed tail poked from the rear of his tuxedo. A pair of black bat-like wings sat folded tightly against his back.

"Hello, Mordecai," I said, examining his new form. "Jesus, dude. Looking good."

"Wow," Donut said, looking him up and down. "I wouldn't kick you out of bed for eating crackers."

Even Mongo's customary screech sounded as if he was in awe.

Mordecai—Incubus. Level 50.

Guildmaster of this guildhall.

This is a Non-Combatant NPC.

Also known as the Gigachad of the Over City, Incubi are the male counterparts of the infamous Succubus. The smooth, seductive, and ultimately deadly Incubus can be identified by his stunning good looks, exquisite charm, and sensuous feet. They can only be found on the urban levels of the dungeon. They give new meaning to the phrase "hit it and quit it."

"Princess Donut, Carl, little Mongo, welcome to the third floor. The training levels have concluded. Now the games may truly begin," Mordecai said, bowing slightly. Even his voice had gotten deeper. He indicated for us to enter.

We walked inside, and the door closed behind us.

"Training levels?" I said. "For fuck's sake. You call those training levels?"

"Oh, thank goodness," Mordecai said once the door closed. He ripped the jacket off and pulled off the tie, unbuttoning the top three buttons. The jacket was odd, with a pair of long slits along the back to accommodate his wings. "I thought you two were never going to show up. I've been in this thing for three hours, waiting for you. I hate formal wear."

"The interview ran long," I said. "I take it the general public can't watch this part?"

"Nope," he said. "They'll watch you go in, and they'll watch you

come out, but they don't get to see what's going on inside. It's like a jury room."

His room was exactly the same as it had always been, but he'd cleaned up even further. A pair of beds had magically appeared since the last time we'd been in here.

"Those are for the transformation, if required," he said. "Remember what happened with Donut when she took that enhanced pet biscuit?"

I swallowed, remembering the weird, gooey blob thing she'd transformed into before.

"So," Mordecai said, "have you decided who wants to go first? I suggest Princess—"

"Me," Donut said, jumping up on one of the beds. "Let's get this rolling."

"Okay, Carl, take a seat," Mordecai said. I sat in one of the chairs. Mongo jumped into my lap and squeaked, sounding concerned.

"Mommy will be okay," Donut said. "You hang out with Uncle Carl for a few minutes while I get some work done. Behave yourself."

The baby velociraptor settled into my lap. I suddenly felt uncomfortable having that many teeth so close to my crotch. If he bit me now, I didn't know what would happen. I suspected he wouldn't teleport away. Instead, he'd get frozen like Frank and Maggie had that one time. Hopefully, I wouldn't find out.

"Okay," Mordecai said. He waved his hand and a screen appeared floating in the air, like we were on Odette's show. "Your current race is 'cat.' This is a list of all the available races you may choose. It looks like you've been given 320 different choices. It is in alphabetical order, and you may click on any of them to drill down to a very specific set of details. Also, the system AI has narrowed it down to a set of three recommendations. We will spend the next hour or so going over these choices, and then I will—"

"I choose cat. Next."

Mordecai took a deep breath. "Donut, there are a few choices on here where you'll actually look mostly—"

“Cat. Final answer. Let’s move on.”

Mordecai looked at me. I shrugged. She’d made it clear from the start that she wasn’t going to change. I was just happy she’d dropped the idea of me turning into a cat also.

“Okay, then,” he said. “A message will pop up, and you have to confirm your choice by clicking on it.”

“Wait,” I said, a horrific thought coming to me. “It’s not going to, you know, change her back to the way she was before, is it?”

“Too late,” Donut said. She glowed for a moment. “I clicked it.” She looked at her paw. “I feel the same.”

“No,” Mordecai said. He looked pointedly at Donut. “But it is important to ask questions like that. I made it so she actually chose to not make a choice. Nothing will change, but she will now have access to a few racial benefits she didn’t have before.”

“Benefits? What are they?” Donut asked.

“I don’t know, Princess Donut,” Mordecai said, sounding exasperated. “We never got to examine the cat choice in the menu. You’ll be able to see when we’re done. And you wouldn’t have changed yet anyway. The change doesn’t happen until the end of the process.”

“Okay, Donut,” I said. “We need to think carefully about this next choice. Let’s see what the AI suggests. Okay?”

“Let’s do this,” she said. “Show me anything with the word ‘princess’ or ‘queen’ in the title.”

“Okay, moving on,” Mordecai said. A list of items appeared on the screen, though the list appeared to be much shorter than the last one.

Mordecai paused, his eyes flashing as he quickly looked over the selections. “Okay, Princess Donut. It looks as if you’ve been given 34 class choices. That’s a pretty short list. In fact, it’s the shortest I’ve ever seen, but I think that’s a combination of your racial choice and a result of your stats. Your base constitution is still two.” He paused. “No, actually it’s four now, thanks to your racial choice of cat.” He again searched through his unseen menus. “Oh, I see now. It’s

actually a combination of four things. You both also have that Desperado pass, which precludes several of the classes right off the bat. And Donut has that tiara on her head, which narrows it even further. But that's all right. There are still a few great choices on there."

"So what's good?" Donut asked, looking at the list. "Ohh, that one sounds cool. It sounds menacing yet mysterious and fun. I pick that one."

"Wait," I said, jumping to my feet. I caught the now-asleep Mongo in the crook of my arm and rushed to the screen. "Do *not* pick anything yet until we've looked it over carefully."

Donut pointed at something entitled **NecroBard**.

Mordecai grunted. "That's actually not a bad choice. It's one of the three recommendations."

I looked over the list. The only base classes available to her were **Bard**, **Magic User**, and **Barbarian**. Each of the base classes had a few additional items under them, including **Necromancer**, **Wind Mage**, and **Warlock**. The **NecroBard** subclass was listed under both **Bard** and **Necromancer**. There was also an **Earth Class** heading, and the majority of the available items were listed under there. Included on that list were several interesting items, including **Feral Cat Berserker**, **Animal Test Subject**, and **Roller Derby Jammer**.

I looked at the list of the three AI-picked recommendations. They were:

Artist Alley Mogul.

NecroBard.

and

Former Child Actor.

I said a silent thank-you to the game gods that they hadn't named the roller derby one "Derby Queen." She probably would've insisted

upon picking it without reading anything. We'd discussed this, and we had a loose plan based on Odette's advice. But Donut was also prone to go off the rails from time to time.

"Donut," I said. "Click on each of the three recommendations so we can see the information."

"I'm telling you right now I am absolutely not choosing this one," Donut said as she clicked on the first choice.

Artist Alley Mogul.

This Charisma- and Intelligence-based class is the modern-day merchant. Using your superior artistic talent to entertain and entice fellow nerds, the Artist Alley Mogul travels the world to sell her copyright-infringing wares. While not particularly menacing physically, this plucky merchant is extremely difficult to hurt. Members of this class receive the following benefits:

+5 Dexterity.

Instant access to the level 5 *Shield* spell.

A 25% discount at all stores plus a 15% bonus to money earned from sales.

10% interest earned on all coins upon descent to the next level.

Level 5 Pathfinder skill.

Access to Enhanced Dodge, which allows the Dodge skill to train to level 20.

Level 5 Dodge skill. [Already obtained.]

Additional subclasses become available on the sixth floor.

This is an Earth Class. As an incentive to choose an Earth Class, you will receive a Silver Earth Box upon choosing this class.

Mordecai grunted. "That incentive is a little weak compared to what they usually do. It's usually a gold box and a couple stat points."

"I'm not surprised," I muttered. My eyes immediately focused on that Pathfinder skill. Odette had said I needed to find something with that skill. But we were looking for something else, too.

"Still," Mordecai said. "This is a very good choice for her. If she can get Dodge over level 15, she will be almost impossible to hit. And a 25% discount at stores is great, too. That'll be on top of the bonus she already gets from her charisma. Stuff will be half-price for her, and that's a huge deal. But most importantly, you'd have access to the Pathfinder skill. It'll make finding stairwells, shops, and guilds much easier."

"Yeah, no," Donut said. "Artist Alley? Really? Aren't those the nerds that like *Star Wars* and draw pictures of cats dressed like the guys from *The A-Team* and stuff?" She shuddered.

"It's a good choice," I said. "Let's look at the other two."

NecroBard.

This unusual class combines one of the most loved occupations with one of the most reviled. Necromancers specialize in magic related to raising the dead. Bards must choose an entertainment-based skill. Depending on this choice, whether it be singing, the kazoo, or storytelling, the resulting crawler will use this skill to either entertain, protect, or glamour both the living and the dead.

The NecroBard receives the following benefits:

Instant access to a level 5 entertainment-based skill of their choice.

Access to all membership-based clubs, regardless of current memberships.

Free rooms at all safe rooms.

A 10% mana cost penalty on all non-Necromancer or non-Bard spells.

Instant access to the level 3 *Turn Undead* spell.

Instant access to the level 3 *Panty Dropper* spell.

+5 to Constitution, Charisma, and Intelligence.

-2 Strength.

Additional benefits depending on entertainment-based skill choice.

“So help me god,” I said, “I will abandon you right here and right now if you choose to take up the kazoo.”

“I could play an instrument,” Donut said, voice full of wonder. “I could be a singer!”

“We want to keep viewers, remember?” I said.

“What this description doesn’t say is that a lot of the necromancer spells will be cast with her instrument,” Mordecai said. “And that means she won’t have to use spell points to cast them. That’s pretty huge. Plus each instrument has a long list of additional benefits. This is a solid choice if you end up picking a DPS class. Something that does a lot of damage. She’ll have a wide range of both protection and other support skills.”

“Carl, look! I could get a harmonica!” Donut said. She’d pulled up the submenu of entertainment skills. She gasped. “Bongos. They have bongos, Carl.”

“Harmonica? How would that even work?” I said. “You don’t have thumbs.”

“You don’t need thumbs for the harmonica, Carl. Not if I get one of those neck thingies.”

I had a quick vision of tiny Zev attempting to strangle me after I allowed Donut to take up a ridiculous instrument. “Please, let’s just look at that third choice.”

Former Child Actor.

This rare subclass is an offshoot of the Character Actor class. It can only be obtained by crawlers who have both received the Cut! achievement and have obtained at least one trillion views.

Once a spoiled brat superstar, then addicted to drugs, you have crawled back from the brink stronger than ever. You are ready for your comeback. This Charisma- and Chance-based class could go either way. You'll either rise to the top, or you'll be dead in a ditch in a week.

This unique Earth Class is based on the Bard/Rogue Jack-of-All-Trades subclass, but with a few distinctive differences.

In addition to the following benefits, the most distinct aspect of this multifaceted class is the level 3 Character Actor skill. This skill increases in level only upon descent to the next floor.

Additional benefits:

Immunity to all poisons and diseases.

Level 5 Cockroach skill.

+10 to Charisma.

+15% faster growth in all Charisma-based skills.

The Manager Benefit.

This is an Earth Class. As an incentive to choose an Earth Class, you will receive a Silver Earth Box upon choosing this class.

I watched Donut's eyes get huge upon reading this one.

"What the hell is the Character Actor skill? Or the Cockroach skill?" I asked. "And what was the Cut! achievement? I don't remember that one."

"I got it for being a good actress," Donut said. "When we tricked the goblin shamankas."

"Okay, but it doesn't explain what the 'character actor' part means. Mordecai?"

Mordecai didn't say anything for several moments. His lip was curled in displeasure. On that incubus face of his, it looked downright menacing.

"What?" he said. "Oh, so 'character actor.' It's a bit complicated. Basically every floor, Donut has to pick a specialty."

"Specialty?" I asked.

"She can basically pick a new class each floor. Each floor from now on will have a theme. So it would be somewhat useful. If it's a floor filled with ice monsters, she can pick a fire class, and so forth. But it's also a chance-based skill. So if she chooses it, and then she chooses a fire mage, the system AI basically rolls the dice and decides how many fire mage spells and skills to give to her. And as soon as she's done with the floor, she loses the skills and starts over. Each higher level of the Character Actor skill, however, gives better skills. It makes it so she is pretty weak for the early levels, but once you get higher, it can be quite powerful depending on her class choices."

"I don't think I like that," I said. "It leaves too much to chance. What about her existing spells, like *Magic Missile* and the like?"

"Those are untouched. But if she chooses a class that has a penalty for those skills or spells, they will apply. For example, if she chooses a necromancer specialty, that *Magic Missile* spell will cost 10% more to cast, but just for the length of that floor. Or if she chooses warlock, her constitution will go down one point for the length of that floor."

I liked that she would be immune to poison and diseases. "What's the Cockroach skill?"

"Basically, it gives a chance to survive a fatal attack. At level five she's guaranteed one free lethal hit a fight, though she'd be near death afterward. At level ten, your health doesn't go down at all after the first fatal strike. The problem is, the only way to train that skill is by using it. Or with potions, or a training guild if you can find one, but that can get expensive."

"I like it," Donut said. "If I pick it, then I can just choose Necro-Bard as my specialty every floor, but pick a different instrument every time. Wouldn't that be neat? It's the best of both worlds!"

"Not necessarily, Donut," I said. "If you get a bad roll from the AI, you might get stuck with underpowered skills and spells until the next floor."

"Exactly," Mordecai said.

"Let's spend some time looking at the other choices," I said. "But of the three, I think I like the Artist Alley one the best."

"I agree," Mordecai said. "I think the NecroBard *might* be better. But you're right, Carl. It's a . . . dangerous choice for your social numbers."

We spent some time going over the other choices, carefully looking at all the abilities. The Feral Cat Berserker was basically a barbarian that'd end up getting her killed immediately thanks to her low health, and the Animal Test Subject was a mage that specialized in using poison. It also caused the crawler to glow green. Warlock was a solid choice in terms of skills, but it caused her to lose one point of constitution, which would make her just too fragile. The others used mostly melee-based attacks and weren't really suitable.

I took a deep breath. "Donut, I know you're not excited about it. But I really think you should go with the Artist Alley Mogul class. It's not perfect, but it's the most well-rounded."

"Okay," she said.

I exchanged a look with Mordecai to see if he was buying it. He appeared skeptical. "Really?" I said.

She approximated a shrug. "We gotta do what's best for the team, right? You want me to be a nerd, I'll be a nerd."

DONUT: CARL, ARE YOU SURE ABOUT THIS? HE IS GOING TO BE REALLY MAD.

CARL: Do it.

"Okay, then," Mordecai said. "The menu is going to pop up now, and you have to scroll down and choose it."

Donut glowed for a moment. A moment later, she glowed again. "Done. I am now a stupid Artist Alley Mogul."

"Goddamnit, Donut!" Mordecai cried. "God-fucking-damnit!"

"And scene," Donut said, waving her paw.