

CHAPTER 1

Builderman awoke first thing in the "morning"—if you could even call it that. His body alarm declared it was four in the morning, yet it was still dark outside. It always was. The clouds covered a black blanket that sheltered them. The only light visible were from the lanterns that illuminated the main cabin; the light inside his sleeping quarters were yet to be turned on.

He shuffled to get up, tiredly making his way towards his bathroom to take a shower. As soon as he took off his clothes, he turned on the sprinkler, the cold droplets of water reaching his skin. Builderman shivered—not from the cold, but rather a feeling. Goosebumps rose on the back of his neck, he felt as if something today was unusual, something had...changed, but he wasn't sure what exactly it was. As he stepped out of the shower, he removed the thoughts from his head, wiping all the excess water with a towel. Despite the unease, he dressed himself and got ready to meet the other survivors. The feeling that this day might be special lingered, and not in a good way.

As Builderman walked toward his main cabin, his heart started to race, the feeling getting worse. His hand hovered on the door knob, contemplating for a bit. The weird feeling continued to linger, causing him to retract his hand, reaching out to open the panel that displayed the icons of each of the ten survivors. Builderman outstretched his hand, an urge to open their information—specifically the '*abilities*' section. As he was to succumb to the said urge, he remembered that he had to meet up with the others first—he had to check if they were alright. He sighed, closing the panel and twisting the knob.

The second he stepped inside, a panicked Shedletsky grabbed him by the shoulders. Though, something *really* had changed. The brunette now had a burger hat, specifically one with a small noob head on top—the same one 007n7 wore.

"*DAVID!!!!*" The bigger (vertically and especially horizontally) man wore a nervous expression on his face, signalling that today was in fact different. "Thank Robloxia you're here, I *really* need your help!!! Something changed with the other survivors and I—and yes, we all woke up earlier than you today somehow, but that's beyond the point!!!! I think we *really* need to discuss this and find out what's happening, *PLEASE HELP ME OUT HERE!!!!*" Builderman stumbled with each time Shedletsky shook him by the shoulders, a cycle of losing and then regaining his balance.

"Alright, alright! Calm down, won't ya? Ya seem real' shaken up, what happened anyway?!" The shorter gray man released himself from the other one's grip, taking a step back for a bit of distance.

"I'm not sure, but I *know* something unusual or weird happened!!! And for some reason, I don't have my sword, yet I have 007n7's burger hat!!!"

Builderman sighed as he fixed his hardhat on his head, slightly adjusting it to make sure it wouldn't fall. "Is that so? Once the others wake, let's hold a meeting before the round starts."

In response to his 'order', Shedletsky grinned and pretended to salute him. Hearing his reassurance helped him to calm down; Boss always knew what to do anyways.

It took a while, but once everyone woke up, they all gathered at the lobby as instructed. There were others that didn't look like they changed—though they most definitely did, and others that seemed to have a change visually. The most evident factor being Two Time and Elliot, who had swapped outfits with each other. (Elliot was not very happy about this, he felt naked, out of place, and very much uncomfortable.)

"We're all here, right? Have any of ya notice somethin' change besides the, y'know, obvious?" The others looked around the room, scanning for any missing survivors. Once they finally confirmed they were all here, the room was silent for a bit. The quiet atmosphere felt eerie yet slightly comforting—an environment they had grown used to. Soft glows of light illuminated the room and areas beside and above it, allowing for you to see clearly in such darkness like the outside.

The silence was broken by none other than Elliot, who was first to express his thoughts to the fellow survivors.

"Well, from what I've observed, we all currently possess someone's belongings, or something that's needed for their abilities... Such as Guest with Chance's coin, me with Two Time's dagger, and Noob with Shedletsky's sword. We also can't seem to separate from the item, I tried to switch back earlier with Two Time, yet something inside the back of my head was forcing my body to resist." The ever so observant pizza boy stated, his words bringing ideas to other people. Though, one thing was clear; today was a special round, and it had something to do with each of their abilities.

To confirm his initial thoughts, Builderman opened the panel. There, he saw a list of all ten of them, including short descriptions and information of each of their abilities. However, something was different this time. Builderman let out a sigh of exhaustion once he realized that he was right; a change had happened, and it would affect the trajectory of their rounds. The man stood up from the floor as he closed the digital screen, clearing his throat before he let out his thoughts spill out of his mouth, watching the other survivors look up at him with expectation, hoping to hear an answer. To their luck, he did.

"Except for Dusekkar, Taph, and me, all of your abilities have... been switched with one another."

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A loud chorus of eight different voices (and hand signals with a meaning so loud it was enough to be heard) echoed throughout the entire room, all in a very synchronized "*WHAT!?*" The survivors stared at the short gray man, eyes as wide as their mouths that extended to the floor. The room echoed in the silence after the storm, but it was clear that it wasn't due to how no one had nothing to be said, it was due to the fact that there was a *lot* to be discussed about.

"I've checked the panel, and it seemed that, er..." His words trailed off, trying to find itself to reform itself into a better sounding sentence to properly describe their current situation. "All yer abilities were switched with one another." Builderman finished, the survivors radiating an aura of shock, surprise, and something much more...tense.

"Despite this," The man continued. "Dusekkar, Taph, and I still have our abilities. Not sure how and why exactly, but I'm more focused on worrying about all of ya lot." Builderman explained. After a long and dreadful quiet, a voice belonging to a certain pumpkin had spoken up, breaking the (not very peaceful) peace.

"What Builderman has said is true, how this happened—I do not have a clue. Though, this does not mean we should fret, as this hasn't been the worst we have been through... yet."

With this, they calmed down a bit, just a tiny bit—it was enough for the tension to fade away, though. However, after the confirmation of what was the change that *the Spectre* decided to torture them with, they were gonna have trouble. The problem wasn't on how they have to manage with abilities completely foreign to them—okay, it had something to do with it, yes, but the *real* big problem was dealing with the killers with their new skills. The best they could hope for was that the killers had switched abilities as well, but the chances of that were slim, so all that was possible and was in their control was the ability to hope and pray. This realization lingered among the survivors for a small period of time before they decided to prepare for the round that was bound to happen in a few hours or so instead of sulking their new (hopefully temporary) fate.

"Well, ah, we should learn to use each other's abilities! That way, we might have a chance during rounds." The brunette, yellow, half-avian swordfighter suggested.

"Have a *what now?*" Chance piqued up, smirking as if he made the world's funniest joke. Everyone (except for Shedletsky, who looked proud about the absolutely horrendous joke) groaned, with someone even throwing a pillow their way, they'd heard that joke way too many times already.

Noob—the timid foodie stood up, avoiding eye contact as their voice wavered. "I..I think Shedletsky's right, if we went into the r-rounds without any practice or knowledge on how our abilities worked... even if we knew what they do, we w-wouldn't be able to survive for long..." Their hands fumbled together as they muttered, still loud enough for their thought to be heard throughout the room. In the middle of all the attention, Noob shrank as they sat back down.

Builderman watched, nodding his head in approval. He absolutely agreed with them, as it'd be better to familiarize themselves with their newfound skills.

"They ain't wrong, steppin' to the rounds ain't wise if ya have zero clue what yer doin'." The CEO responded, which gave the other survivors a green light to teach each other how to use their abilities. Next thing they knew, they were guiding each other of their respective skills; all of them attempting to finish before the intermission end's clock caught up to them and the round started.

"Last time I used a gun, I was at war." The veteran mumbled as he observed the flintlock that looked small in his hand, a visible contrast. He turned his head to the double-sided coin on the other, gaze switching between the circular currency and the gun. Chance butted his head, peeking behind Guest 1337's shoulder.

"You know how to aim a gun then, right? And how to flip a coin?" Guest 1337 nodded, confirming the gambler's inquiry. "Alright then, well you know the basics—flipping a coin either gives a charge or a stack of weakness, blah, blah, blah—just remember to flip until you reach three of those charges, a'ight?"

"Okay, what was that one ability that you had called, again? *'Hat Fix?'* The one you use at three charges to reset your gun everytime it explodes and all your weakness?" Oh, right. Hat Fix—something that Chance does, one of their more important abilities. How would Guest 1337 be able to use it though? They were like, 99.99% sure that the veteran didn't own a hat. Suddenly, the gambler's hand unconsciously moved to the top of his head, feeling their fedora that lay on top of there.

... "Here, use this for that ability, 'kay? I feel kinda bald now, but that's less important than you probably dying from fifteen stacks of weakness or something." Chance moved his fedora to the top of Guest 1337's head, ignoring the fact that they (low-key) had to go on his toes in order to reach the top of the soldier's head. "There! Now that you've gotten somethin' you can use to activate 'Hat Fix'. Guess you could call me a genius, hah!" The gambler laughed, taking a step back to take in the entire silhouette of the man standing in front of them.

Guest 1337 stared for a bit, his hand slowly reaching to the top of his head, his touch now met with a fedora—*Chance's fedora*, instead of the familiar feeling of his hair. They stared at each other for a second too long, with the veteran being the first to break eye contact (and the elite level of awkwardness seeping in) through facing away and clearing his throat, his gaze now focused on the flintlock. He turned around, facing the dartboard. The group had never really played darts often, so the gambler tended to use it to practice aiming their shots, though the cabin seemed to clean and rid itself of the gunshots every round—as if it was never there to begin with.

"Try shooting for the black parts while I spin it! Just some practice for later." The gambler smirked, walking over to the dartboard hanging loosely on a hammerer nail and spinning it. As

the pair practiced, Shedletsky and Noob were outside of the cabin, practicing on swinging their sword.

"This is so heavy-!" Noob exclaimed, attempting to swing it properly, only for gravity to do it's job and causing them to bring their arms down as they attempted to hold the weapon, exhaling heavily for every time they fail. It was getting exhausting—just a cycle of trial and error. They were on the verge of breaking, like, why give *them* the sword?! How much did that.. 'Spectre', as it called itself, hate their guts?! They couldn't protect others like this, and it'd be all their fault. Their fault that they can't help anyone. They couldn't help with their items as a survivalist, and now, once they have the chance to actually *protect* others, they can't? Because the sword is too damn heavy, or because they're scared, or because...maybe they never were made to help. The thought haunted them. Maybe they should just—

"Focus, Noob! Come on, you got this!" A voice called out. Right, Shedletsky was still here. Here to witness them fail over, and over, and over. "Here, grip like this and try to raise it. It's *way* easier to carry!" He flashed them a grin, as if he believed in them. Believed that they were capable, capable of helping the others. It was.. comforting. Of course it was, they could always rely on Shedletsky, even if he *could* cause people headaches, he was a good man. Not really just a man, more of like a half-avian, half-human man, but that didn't change the fact that they could always count on Shedletsky when they're struggling or in danger.

Noob nodded as they followed Shedletsky's guide, positioning their grip—properly, this time—as they attempted to lift it up again. This time, it...worked. Turns out, Noob had actually been holding it wrong the whole time, with their hands having to be closer to the guard rather than the pommel. As they examined the sword in their grip, they felt proud—well, for a second before realizing that they have to learn how to actually *swing* it properly this time. However, they had Shedletsky to guide them, to be the teacher that guides the student. That thought, this current moment... it gave Shedletsky déjà vu. Nevertheless, they continued until Noob got the hang of it—or maybe, until the intermission's timer's end engulfs eight out of ten of the survivors.

Elliot and Two Time stared at their current possessions (and outfits) as they contemplated how to start this out. Unlike the others, the two of them had switched with each other, rather than the other switching with another survivor, that switched with another survivor, that—alright, focus.

"Well, I'm sure you know the basics of my pizza throw, right?" The (former) pizza boy smiled, though it seemed a little nervous. He pointed to the pizza satchel slung around the cultist's shoulder and waist. That satchel (magically) generated pizzas that would usually be prepared before the round, a job often done by Elliot. However, Elliot wasn't the pizza boy—but rather the pizza *person*, Two Time. The cultist's gaze followed his finger as their hand drifted to the opening, slipping it open and staring inside. It was... a black void. Fascinating, Two Time thought. The smile—that seemed to be permanent on their face,—grew wider as they created possibilities on how this phenomenon could happen, slowly guiding their hand inside. Reaching

in, they felt nothing, as if it was simply an empty hole with no end, no walls, and certainly nothing inside.

However, as their hand slowly exited the bag, it seemed as if someone or *something* was forcing them to crawl around an object, though it felt as some empty space. That was not the case as they pulled out, watching as a pizza materialized onto their hand. Two Time's eyes lit up, mustering something that sounded remotely prayerful under their breath.

"The Spawn has blessed thee with the gift of production of these healing delicacies, he who is great shows of his power once again..!" They muttered in amusement. How was Elliot doing? Well, whether or not conscious or unconsciously—maybe even *subconsciously*—he was slowly inching away. The aura around Two Time was radiating pure insanity, which was honestly to be expected. Nevertheless, Elliot decided to slowly walk towards the cultist and tap them on the shoulder, knocking them out of their... thoughts.

"Ah, Two Time? Do you need any help with learning to use your abilities, or-"

"Worry not, dearest former healer! I've already memorized your abilities and usage, so I am very much familiar with them. Let me instead assist you with *your* current kit, as we have switched directly with each other." Two Time slipped the pizza back into the void-satchel, eyeing the dagger that loosely fit itself in Elliot's grip, their pupils dilating at the sharp object in his possession.

Elliot stared nervously as he observed the dagger, watching the dull silver faintly glint in the light. He decided to test an ability—*Crouch*. It allowed for him to be faintly visible, not completely transparent yet still enough to not be seen if in the shadows and such. From this ability, he would gain stealth and undetectability, a viable liability to use when trying to hide from the killer as it would erase his aura. Additionally, it was perfect to be paired with stabbing, as it seemed as if there was a force that allowed for you to lunge once stabbing someone. Despite the low amount of health, the dagger—thankfully— heals either 10 or 20 health points for every stab or backstab. Being able to heal yourself—something Elliot has never been able to. Even if he could, he wouldn't. The pizza was for the others, not for him.

"I am positive you are aware of how to stab and crouch, so I shall teach you how to properly *backstab* so you may protect the others or restore your health during dire situations."

Two Time instinctively reached out for the dagger, yet stopped. Whether by force or by realization—they retreated their hand away from the weapon in Elliot's possession. "Position yourself with the dagger, hide in the shadows. Make sure that the opponent is not aware of your presence. Once their back is revealed to you, then you must strike."

Grabbing a pizza from the satchel, they demonstrated what they had just described, the pie used as a replacement. Two Time crouched, tucking the dagger—well, *pizza*—behind their back as they approached an unsuspecting tree. Unfortunately, due to not having the ability to crouch

anymore, they stayed very much visible despite hiding in the shadows. Nonetheless, they still performed the act of backstabbing, lunging from their position as they penetrated the tree from behind with their ever-so-featful pizza slice. It was certainly a sight to see. Despite that, Elliot couldn't help but feel impressed. The way they displayed how to use the ability with such precision, especially with a literal *pizza slice* of all things, it was admirable.

Following Two Time's footsteps, Elliot crouched and tucked himself away in the shadows. As soon as he performed this act, he was enveloped in a feeling of having slightly disappeared away, an aura of silence radiating in the air—it was almost peaceful, if not for the reminder that he'd have to exclusively use this against an actual *killer* with barely any guarantee of actual success considering his inexperience in this field.

Elliot approached the tree, imagining it was one of their opponents that aimed to kill all of them rather than some random plant. Focusing on the tree, he envisioned that it was a perfectly good back shown to him, a wonderful opportunity for him to strike, and strike he did.

Pushing back the dagger gripped with both hands, extending to arm's length, he reached out to stab the "back of the killer". A simple job, considering how it was standing still without any ability to move whatsoever. As soon as he moved to stab, he felt himself lunge forwards, sliding by the lonesome tree, which resulted in him landing (tumbling) as he fell down. Elliot lay there on the ground, his grip loosening on the dagger.

He completely missed.

The cultist stepped to their trainee's side, kneeling down beside him. With this amount of skill in backstabbing, they knew that he had a *long* way to go. Right now, they simply kept the embarrassed pizza boy company as Elliot sulked on the mistake, realizing that he couldn't help the others like *that*. He stood back up, legs a little wobbly from the awkward position he had fallen into. Gripping the dagger even tighter, he turned to Two Time with a determined look in his eyes, still keeping his signature smile.

"Let's try again! I need to work harder, and practice makes perfect, after all!" Two Time stared, slowly grinning wider in acceptance to Elliot's suggestion, and there they continued; the two of them practiced backstabbing until the newly assigned stealth sentinel got the hang of it, as well as including to attempt the fundamentals of trickstabbing during their practice.

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The clock ticked, 30 minutes until the round started. All ten survivors gathered in the living room, forming a game plan (as usual). Their seating positions were arranged by their class, divided into three: Survivalists, Supports, and Sentinels. Builderman—taking charge of them—unfolded

a piece of bond paper before them, taking out a pencil that had been resting from the back of his ear.

“Let’s treat this the same as our *normal* rounds, except for the switched abilities. I assume that y’all have at least some familiarity with one another’s skills, considering how we’ve practiced for about 45 minutes or so.”

Builderman scribbled on the paper, showcasing their strategy for the round for each map that was due to happen. Discussion occurred around the table, each of them attempting to predict the next map or killer.

“We’ve already gotten John Doe, so the possibility of him being next *again* is unlikely.” Builderman recalled the last round, thoughts of when they previously had their proper abilities—possibly even the *last* time that they would ever have their abilities back.

“It’s only a *small* chance, not a guaranteed zero! We’ve already had the same killer in a row *thrice* one time, anyways.” Shedletsky interrupted, reminding that chances could be slim, not zero.

“Even so, we should focus on what has much higher odds so far. That way, we won’t have to be so nervous about something that doesn’t have a likely probability of happening.”

The half-avian man took this into consideration, nodding as he raised his hands in surrender. “Alright, alright. If we, hypothetically, cross John Doe out, we have a 33.33% chance for everyone else. Any thoughts?”

Guest 1337 shifted in his seat, slightly leaning back on the couch. “We should focus on the killer that has taken quite a while to show up—that of which being Jason, no? Well, it’d make most sense after all.”

“He’s right,” Elliot added, his thumbs fiddling with one another as he clasped his hands together. “The killer that hasn’t appeared in a while most likely would be selected once, so it’s probably most sensible for them to be next! That still doesn’t defeat the likelihood of a repeat, though.”

The survivors murmured with one another, the room slowly filling up with noises of conversations and discussions focused around the same or similar topics. To end the loud chatter, the CEO raised his hand, quickly shutting his surroundings up.

“Alright, enough ‘bout this killer thing. We gotta *actually* create plans rather than thinking of a couple of odds.”

And so they discussed, forming possible situations and their line-up, focusing on that instead. The clock ticked as they continued, reminding them of every passing second—a countdown for not even Builderman knows what to happen.

Soon enough, the timer reached one minute, sixty seconds of pure uncertainty, and a sliver of hope in their plan. The nine of them looked to Builderman for any sort of reassurance, returned with Builderman simply nodding at them.

Deep down—Builderman was *scared*. Scared that his plan wouldn't work, scared this was all in vain. He wasn't gonna express it to the others, though, why would he? Feelings spread and influence, showing what he *truly* thought about their strategy, expressing his uncertainty, it was unwise. Hence, he returned them a calm expression, a nod that told them that everything was gonna be okay.

Deep down? That wasn't something he believed, but he wanted to. He *had* to.

And so, the counter went down, every passing second adding more and more weight on all of the survivors' shoulders like a shared burden.

3...

007n7's hand crept up to the back of his neck, his fingers itched on his skin. The exploiter's own touch felt cold, foreign, even to himself.

2...

Taph fiddled with the homemade bomb that rested in their hands—fidgeting with the strings that held it together, sensing the unbearable feeling that radiated around the room.

1.

The round has started.

Tab 2

