

Catastrophic Charity (Mass Inanimate TF)

The bell above the entrance rang with a little *ding* as the door opened, and a pretty young woman stepped into the store. “Good morning~!” she called, struggling to navigate between the stacks of ratty clothes and dusty board games missing half their pieces. Not to mention the cans of tinned food going steadily out of date. “I’m here to donate to charity!”

Behind the desk, Grabulon snapped upright, eyes wide in surprise. Rubbing the sleep out of them, he struggled for words and, failing to find his script, resorted to wild incredulity. Finally, as the young blonde herself reached the desk, he turned and spun and ran flailing for the backroom. “Miss Carribel! Miss Carribel! It’s happened again! It’s happened again!”

The blonde flinched, hands snapping instinctively to her handbag inside it as a series of thumps echoed from the backroom. The door flew open, and out shot a woman who looked like she’d dressed herself in the contents of her own charity shop. “Grabulon!” she cried. “Why didn’t you tell me we have a customer?”

“I-I di—”

She struck him over the head with a Monopoly set missing all the hotels and pushed his insensate body under the counter. “Never mind him, miss. I’m the real proprietress of this charity shop. How can I help you?” She gave her a reassuring smile.

The young woman only gripped her handbag tighter. “Well, I was looking to donate,” she said. “I’ve got a whole bag of clothes in the car, and—”

“A whole bag of clothes?” said Carribel, cocking her head. “Oh, yes! Clothes! Yes, all us humans have bags of clothes, don’t we? Haha. But you said you wanted to donate? Well, that’s incredibly encouraging! Please, why don’t you just follow me through here...” Without waiting for a response, she grabbed the woman’s shoulders and herded her into the backroom.

Before she stepped through herself, she took the chance to kick Grabulon in the ribcage. “Why didn’t you tell me she was here to donate?” she hissed.

Grabulon vomited up a lump of his insides.

Rolling her eyes, Carribel threw herself into the backroom, slamming the door behind her.

On the other side, the young woman stood shaking in terror, convinced she was about to be murdered or trafficked or forced to sign up for a time-share. “Please,” she said, as Carribel entered, “I just wanted to donate some cl—”

“Oh, don’t worry!” said Cabbibel, scratching an elfin ear and flicking the light switch. “We’ll get you sorted in a shake of gremfalon’s blark!” With a series of snaps, the lights came out, revealing the room to be utterly empty... save for one single object. It looked a lot like a giant Rubik’s Cube after someone had peeled off all the stickers. (Which meant it was in much

better condition than most of the *actual* Rubik's Cubes out front.) Thick cables connected it to the walls of the store.

"Wh-what's that?" asked the young blonde, eyes wide in shock.

"*That*," said Carribel, patting her reassuringly on the shoulder. "Is our donation box. Perhaps you'd care to take a closer look?" Without waiting for a response, she pushed the blonde towards it.

With a click, the box lit up, shining lines of circuitry tracing all over its cuboid form. Rising into the air, it split down the middle, and with a snap it opened to reveal a giant electronic eye glowing a vivid blue. The blonde squealed as it looked her up and down. "Wh-what is—?"

"Hello," said the box, voice drab, "and thank you for choosing to donate yourself to the Frabulab Recovery Fund. Planet Frabulab truly appreciates your sacrifice in the name of the greater good!"

"The greater good," said Carribel, nodding eagerly.

"To begin the process, kindly touch the Ominous, humming Orb." The eye started to hum.

"Wh-what is this?" said the blonde, backing away. "I just came to donate some clothes!"

The Orb blinked. Carribel blinked. For several seconds, the room was silent.

"Oh," said Carribel. "That's unfortunate." She scratched her chin. "Well, no takesy-backsies, as you humans like to say!" And without another word, she gave the woman an enormous push straight into the Orb. The blonde screamed as she slammed into it. "Is that how that expression works? Am I getting that right?"

Pulling away from the box with a squeal, the blonde stumbled back, hair disheveled, one shoe halfway off her foot. Meanwhile, the Orb itself hummed louder and louder. "Acceptance confirmed. Thank you for donating. Processing in 3... 2... 1..."

A beam of blue light swept over the blonde's form. She squealed and turned to run.

Halfway to the door, a beam of blinding blue light flew from the Orb and slammed into her back. She screamed as it vaporized her clothes and exposed every inch of her toned, athletic body. With a second scream, she started to shrink, her body fattening, plumped up, even as she grew smaller overall. Her limbs collapsed into a fat little stubs with flat ends, her skin turned to coarse brown fabric, and stitches appeared all over her form.

Finally, with a pair of pops, her eyes transformed into a pair of buttons, and with that, she dropped to the floor, utterly inanimate.

"Processing complete," said the donation box, slamming shut with a crack. "Item Produced: One (1) Well-Loved Teddy Bear. Please insert the object into the delivery capsule to complete the Donation."

Snatching the bear up, Carribel marched over the box and struggled to force it into a little hatch on the side. "You know," she said, straining to get it inside, "you could make this a little easier."

"Fuck you," said the donation box.

Finally, with a grunt, she managed to get the teddy in. The hatch slammed shut, and the donation box crackled as if building up a charge. Finally, it flashed, bright light pouring through its seams. "Delivery Complete," it declared. "Thank you for donating to the Frabulab Recovery Fund." It went dark.

Wiping her hands, Carribel marched out, flicking the light switch behind her.

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Back in the front of the store, she threw herself on the counter with a groan of despair. "I can't believe this, Grabulon."

Grabulon, who was in the middle of performing surgery on his fractured rib, looked up with a frown. "Can't believe what, Miss Carribel?"

"How absolutely *shit* it is to work in a charity shop! Are we never going to get any donations?!"

Grabulon looked from her to the backroom and back again. "But... didn't we just...?"

"Of course we did! But only because *I* convinced her of the nobility of donating to the Homeworld's recovery fund, Grabulon! If not for *my* efforts, she would have sauntered out of her with a tin of beans, and we'd have nothing more to send the starving children of Frabulab than these disgusting human money-things." She bit into a coin. "Urgh, it tastes awful! ...I just don't understand why we aren't having any success! When we arrived here after the Big Fuck-Up, I thought we'd have people queuing to become terrible board games and moldy shirts for all the refugees of the Frabulab system! Instead, we can barely get the humans to enter the store...!"

Grabulon put a plaster over the hole where Carribel's heel had punctured him. "Whatever can we do, Miss Carribel?"

Carribel stroked her chin in thought. "Hmm... hmm... hmmm... Ahah! I know! I have the perfect idea!"

Grabulon wiped his brow. "Phew! That's wonderful, Miss Carribel!"

"We can blame *you*! This is all your fault, Grabulon! If you were a more convincing salesman, we'd have people lining up to donate themselves in droves! Frabulab's orphans would be swimming in tatty toys and ratty clothes by now! This is all *your* fault! Where's your spirit of charity, Grabulon?!"

He quailed. "I'm sorry, Miss Carribel! I must have left it on the homeworld!"

"Oh, you're no use!" With a sigh, Carribel collapsed onto the counter. "Maybe we need a change of strategy. Perhaps if we were more *aggressive*, we'd be able to convince more people to donate..."

Garbulon wrung his hands like a pangolin. "Aggressive, Miss Carribel?"

She snapped upright, mouth stretching into a grin. "Yes. Yes! Yes, that's exactly what we need to do! We need to be more aggressive! And I know exactly how!" With a maniacal laugh, she reached under the counter and punched a button. "Soon, the entire Earth will want to donate! Ahahahahah!" *Beep!*

Grabulon flew from his feet as the entire charity shop lurched. From the till sprouted a set of controls, and with another wild laugh, Carribel grabbed them and jerked. Grabulon slammed into the floor as the store shot upward.

From the ceiling dropped an array of monitors, revealing the streets of the city around them and the hundreds of tiny humans below, all screaming in shock and struggling to dodge the charity shop's slender legs.

Carribel pushed a button, and a microphone dropped from above. "Attention, humans of Earth!" Her voice boomed through the city, freezing those in the process of running away—for a second, the city hung in suspense, just waiting to hear what she had to say.

Adjusting the mic, Carribel cleared her throat. "...We apologize for interrupting your busy lives, but the Planet Frabulab depends on your donations! Please, sign up today to support the Frabulab Recovery Fund! Even small amounts make a big difference!" She paused to let the humans below soak up her words.

In the meantime, she pushed the mic away and turned to Grabulon. "Have we had any donations yet?"

He studied his monitor. "Hmm..." He squinted. "No. No, not really..."

"Not *really*...?"

"No."

"Perhaps they can't hear me?" She tapped the mic. "Hello? Humans of Earth. If you missed my previous message, Planet Frabulab *needs* your Donations! Please, sign up today! You can even adopt a Frabulabian yourself! Look at how cuddly we are!"

She snapped her gaze to Grabulon. "Any results?"

"As a matter of fact, we're receiving even *fewer* donations, Miss Carribel."

“B-but we haven’t made *any* yet!” With an awful groan, Carribel slammed her arms into the counter. “What’s it going to take to make your people donate?! How selfish can you be?!”

Predictably, this did very little to improve donations.

With a snarl of despair, Carribel threw back her head. “That’s it!” she cried. “If they won’t donate, I’m going to make them!”

She punched a button on the till; a fresh set of controls emerged. These looked a lot more like the controls of a turret. With a dark chuckle, she wrenched them forward, sending the charity shop skittering spider-like over the nearest row of buildings and towards the city center. “Now...” she said, rubbing her hands together. “Just who should we ask to donate first? Hmm...” She scratched her chin. “Grabulon, what do we need the most of?”

Grabulon looked around. “Er, clothes?”

“Clothes it is! I know where to find clothes!” With a laugh, Carribel spun the shop to face the nearest mall and grabbed the controls of the gun. “Give me a countdown, Grabulon.”

“Um... three... two—”

“Too slow! Ooone!” With a wild cry, Carribel punched the button to fire. The entire shop shook as the donation box down below discharged, and a beam of blue light, blinding as the sun, flew from the giant raygun protruding from between the shop’s spindly legs. With an ear-splitting zzzzap!, it flew across the city and slammed straight into the side of the mall, washing over the building and painting the entire structure bright azure.

Behind the counter, Carribel wailed in delight. “Yes! Yes! How do you like that, humanity?”

As she cheered and Grabulon cowered, the shopping mall rose from the ground like an untethered balloon, hovering above the city in stark defiance of gravity. If you looked close enough, you could see the people in the main entrance screaming and panicking, struggling for an escape route. Carribel only laughed that much harder.

Rubbing her hands, she punched another button on the controls and with a *vwip!*, the shopping mall stretched as if it had fallen into a black hole. Thinner and thinner it became with the second, like a clump of wool being forced through the spinner, till at last it was all but invisible. Finally, it vanished inch by inch, as if slipping into a portal.

This wasn’t too far from the truth. At the same time as the mall was disappearing, something very similar to it appeared inside the charity shop. Leaning on the counter, Carribel watched with a laugh as an awful, stuffy jumper, ragged and well-worn, stitched itself into existence before her, as if it were being woven by a giant, invisible spider.

Finally, with a crackle of sparks, the jumper ceased to spin itself and dropped out of the sky with a sound like a fart. Carribel snatched it up before it could strike the floor.

Holding it up, she pressed her face against the fabric and sighed in satisfaction. “Ah, delightful. Grabulon, if you’d be a sweet little homunculus and take this to the donation box, I might not spit on you when we have sex later, okay? Good.”

As he hurried off, she grabbed the controls again. “Now, what do we need next...? Ah! How about some tinned food? I’m sure the orphans of Frabulab would love some tinned food! Hmm...” Spinning the charity shop around, she frowned as she searched for an appropriate target. “Let’s see... let’s see... Ahaha! Perfect!”

Her eyes (and targeting reticle) came to a stop aimed at a busy train station—or, more specifically, at the crowded passenger train approaching it at speed. Licking her lips, she fingered the fire button.

Zzzap!

A blinding beam of transmutative energy flew from the underside of the shop and struck the train’s nose, spiraling down the length of its shaft in instants. For several seconds, the entire vehicle glowed and groaned as the alien energy coursing through it, making its surface tingle with sparks and arc with little bolts of energy. Inside, the passengers screamed and pounded against the windows or else fought to escape by kicking down the doors. None were successful.

Finally, with a little pop, the lead car collapsed in on itself, instantly reduced to a tiny metal cylinder, so small it could have fit in a human hand. An instant later, the car behind it followed suit, then the car behind that, and so on and so on, all the way down the line, till none of the original vehicle remained whatsoever.

With a second series of pops, it vanished car by car, and back in the charity shop Carribel laughed like a demon as cans of spam rained from the sky one after enough, landing with little thuds on the shop floor. “Ahahaha! Now who’s the one who sends too many letters?!”

With a groan, Grabulon stumbled out of the backroom, sweating with exhaustion.

“Grabulon!” she snapped. “What are you waiting for? Pick those cans up and take them to the donation box this instant!” When he hesitated, she threw the dog from Monopoly at him. “If you don’t hurry up, you’ll get the boot!” She held it up, so he knew she wasn’t joking.

As Grabulon busied himself with transporting the cans, Carribel turned her attention to the next item on their list. “Hmm. What else would the poor, suffering folk of Frabulab—may its glory reign eternal—need? Hmm. Ahah! How about some fun games to amuse them during the acidic rain and meteor season? Yes!”

She swung the controls around, making the charity shop spin like a drunk as she searched for an appropriate target. “Let’s see... let’s see... Ahah!” her eyes settled on a nearby stadium, full of cheering fans. Chuckling to herself, she thrust the controls forward, sending the charity shop skittering straight over.

As the shop came to a stop poised over the stadium—much to the shock and horror of the players and supporters alike—Carribel rubbed her hands together with a laugh. “Three... two... aaaand one!” With a tremendous zap, the charity shop’s beam struck the stadium. It hit the very center of the pitch and surged outward, making the players scream as it coursed up their feet. A roll of gasps rose from the crowd as it crashed into them too.

Back in the shop, Carribel watched with a rapidly-widening smirk as the stadium rose into the air, twitching and groaning as if it were about to explode, crumpled in on itself, collapsed, flattened out.

As it shrank, thin sticks speared the players on the pitch, binding each team in rows, and four spindly legs sprouted from its base. With that, it vanished with a flash, and Carribel laughed as a well-used foosball table landed with a thud in the center of the store.

Grabulon, freshly returned from the backroom, came to a stop and groaned in exhaustion.

Ignoring him, Carribel flung the controls backward, sending the charity shop soaring into the air. Thrusting them forward, she flew across the city, a fun idea already dancing in the forefront of her mind.

As the charity shop reached the city center, Carribel brought it to an abrupt stop and looked down on the streets below with their high-priced shops and hotels and waterworks. Giggling, she rubbed her hands together. Oh, this was going to be her best work yet. With a last laugh, she punched the button to fire.

Like lightning, energy flew from the shop’s raygun and crashed into the center of the city, spilling outward in a wash of blue light, as if someone had accidentally dropped a bucket of ghostly paint on the place. Down below, the people screamed and ran for cover, not that they could possibly escape.

As the energy finished spreading to the edge of the city center, the entire scene seemed to freeze, tableau. Even the people in the middle of running for cover seemed to snap to a halt, caught in time.

Carribel twisted the control knob, gave it another punch. The beam arced and crackled and flare, and with a tremendous *zzzap!*, the city center rose into the air, clumps of earth falling from below it. As it gained height, it also shrank, squeezed like a ball of clay in the potter’s hands. Smaller and smaller it became, till at last it was completely invisible. No matter how hard Carribel looked, she couldn’t spot it.

Finally, with a little pop, a box appeared in the air in the center of the charity shop and dropped with a thump to the floor. Leaving the controls for a moment, Carribel hopped over and picked it up. The name on the box filled her with glee: ‘Monopoly’.

With a laugh, she ripped off the lid and looked inside. There it was, in all its glory: board and houses and fake plastic money and all those strange little metal objects that made such excellent projectiles.

Grabbing the controls, Carribel flung them apart and starting firing off shots at random. One by one, bolts crashed into the city below, turning building after building into box after box of cheap, unwanted goods and catching up poor unfortunates who happened to be inside them to boot.

“Yes! Yes!” As donation after donation disappeared into the box, Carribel threw back her head in a wild scream of ecstasy. “Yes! This is how we should have done it from the start! Ahahahahaha!”

Laughing like a demon, she grabbed the controls again and wrenched them back, sending the charity shop flying high into the air. Grabulon screamed as he slammed into the floor.

“Now for the grand finale!”

On the monitors, the city outside grew smaller and smaller, until at last it was indistinguishable from the surrounding land. Soon, the Earth itself dwindled away until all that remained was a blue and green ball floating in the starscape.

Carribel chuckled. “Actually, that gives me an idea...” With a little laugh, she tapped a new program into the console, grabbed the controls and took aim at the world down below. “Let’s see how those stupid orphans like *this!*”

She punched the fire button with a *beep!*

With a crackle that couldn’t be heard because they were in space, the charity shop’s raygun built up an enormous charge. Over the span of the seconds, it grew larger and larger and larger, till soon it shone like a miniature sun, grown so huge it dwarfed the shop above it.

And then, just like that, it burst.

Energy shot, screaming, at the planet down below. Slamming into the continent below, it spread across the world in a wave of etheric, fizzling blueness, leaving the entire planet glistening like a single giant ocean.

Leaping over the counter, Carribel grabbed the main monitor and pulled it down to her level, grinning madly as she squinted at the screen. As she watched, her mouth curling in a grin, the planet started to shrink, growing smaller and smaller with every passing second until at last it couldn’t be seen at all. Finally, it vanished entirely, hidden by the light as if it were a miniature sun itself. A moment later, even this disappeared from sight.

With a tiny pop, a blue and green ball appeared in the center of the charity shop, dropped to the ground, and bounced several times before rolling into a corner. Carribel grinned as she picked it up. “Thank you for your generosity~.”

“Miss Carribel? ...Miss Carribel?”

“Yes? What is it?” she snapped, pausing in her rampage to throw a book from 1802 at him.

“Um, well, you see, it’s a message from the homeworld, Miss...”

Carribel froze. “A message...? From the homeworld...?”

“That’s right! They, ah, they’re really impressed with the amount of donations we’ve sent recently!”

Carribel beamed. “Ah! I bet they want to send me a reward!”

“...So they assume we must have been slacking until now and want us to send ten times as much to make up for it.”

Carribel’s smile collapsed like a punctured balloon. “T-ten times as much? B-but how are we supposed to do that when we don’t have a planet to work on anymore?”

“They said they were sure you’d figure something out, Miss.”

Carribel collapsed, spluttering, and slammed her head into the desk as if trying to hammer in a nail. “Oh the hu-charity!”