

# Code Monkey Run

Superficially, Code Monkey Run is yet another mobile runner game; the player directs a running monkey down an endless road, dodging the usual obstacles, acquiring the usual power-ups, and so forth until the monkey hits an obstacle. The general theme is computer-related (hence the name), and the game is free-to-play. It's mildly dull, though; and having your code monkey dodge computer chips and whatnot quickly palls. Most people download it, play it a couple of times, then stop.

Which is relieving, because that means that at least the curse spell built into Code Monkey Run at least isn't indiscriminate. Death curses often are. But this one has a solid design; 'fortunately,' it only targets specific people. Specifically, executives of a large gaming company that happened to callously fire a certain game designer and steal all of the designer's intellectual property in the process. Which was not nice of them -- and, given that the game designer happened to be a hyper-powerful but untrained mage -- not **wise** of them either.

The curse acts as follows: the game gets uploaded and downloaded and whatnot, perfectly innocently, until it

encounters someone who fits the curse's criteria. Then it insinuates itself into the target's mind. The game (to that person) is now suddenly a perfect runner game, and utterly engrossing; not enough at first to cause obsessive use, but the target will play it at least once a day for at least a half hour. And he or she will get extremely good at it. Good enough, in fact, to get to the Special Level.

Once they're at the Special Level? Yes, that's where the obsessive play starts. The obstacles that the code monkey races over and around start to look familiar. The faces on some of the mobile opponents start to look familiar, too. The atmosphere of the game gets steadily darker and more disturbing -- but the play is even more engrossing. Very quickly, the victim is playing 20 hours a day, heedless of everybody and everything around him. And then, after finally falling asleep, the victim dreams that he is inside the game as the code monkey -- and now he must run for as long as he can. After he eventually fails -- and, yes, dies in his sleep -- the game quietly deletes itself from his cell phone and the curse waits for the next victim.

This is one of the *vicious* curses, and the worst part is: the person who created Code Monkey Run has no idea that it's a cursed item at all. That, and the fact that the curse only affects one victim at a time, makes predicting its

deathly progress very difficult. Given enough victims, investigators will eventually figure out the connection -- which leads to the next question: how to shut the curse off? And it has to be shut off: after all, the curse is biting on people who merely work for the company, not just the ones who participated in the original fire and theft. And even those people should probably not be condemned to actually **die**, or anything.

No, really, they should not be.

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