Evolution 108

Chapter 108: The First Death Game

Sometime later...

Levi was seen smiling on the bench, satisfied with the final avatar's picture... With one final look, he exited his profile and went to the Nocturnal Ring's Death Games homepage.

It was designed to show many live Death Games screens happening simultaneously in a circular layout, each view getting smaller as it neared the center.

At the center, two shadowy words stood out:

Play a Game.

With hundreds of screens flickering around it in a circular motion, the button took on a hypnotic pull, drawing a player to press it.

"All tactics used to entice the players to keep joining those death traps... but they sure do work," Levi murmured, his finger pressing the button.

He wasn't scared to start his first game this early for three reasons:

The games' difficulty and complexity rose based on the combined average power level of all participants. This meant that the weaker Levi was, the weaker his competitors would be, making his first game much easier for him. If he were to unlock an additional ability, it would raise his average power, even if that ability might not be that useful.

Levi didn't want to risk it, not in his first game at least... he wanted it to be like a tutorial for what awaited him.

Second, the moment the Rifters were assembled in each game, they were given a minimum of a week to prepare. This would give Levi time to lock in and train to the best of his ability, improving his fighting skills and learning the game's mechanics.

Yet the most important reason was the Nocturn's Pardon... the virgin players in their first game were pardoned by Nocturn himself if they met a certain death.

This gave them one last chance to reconsider whether the Ring was for them or not.

However, if the players survived the first game on their own—whether they won or not—the Nocturn's Pardon expired... it didn't affect the first death, only the first game.

With these reasons combined, Levi realized the best time to get a taste of the program was now... even Ash'Kral had advised him to do the same, believing Levi could steamroll those weaklings.

After pressing the button, a new screen popped up before Levi. It was filled with thousands of shadowy cards, each bearing the Nocturnal Ring's insignia on its back.

A similar button sat at its center, but this one had a single word:

Randomize.

Levi pressed it and watched the cards shuffle among each other for a few seconds... once they stopped, all the cards began pulsing with a gentle light, as if pulling Levi to choose one.

He took a deep breath and glanced one last time around him. As his spiritual eyes swept over the myriad races and the busy streets of the Ring's main hub, he knew his future was here.

No hesitation...he reached out and picked one of the cards near the center. Immediately, the sea of cards crashed apart, leaving the chosen one behind. It flipped over and expanded to cover the entire screen:

// Game Structure: Survival

Game Name: Wailing Bone Pit.

Nocturnal Rifters Number:

The Combined Average Power Level: 11,3N...Range(5N_12N)

Ranks allowed: Homeless.

Map Fragments Pot: 30 (One map fragment for each Rifter)

Battle Map: The Echoing Ossuary.

Prize Pool:Orril's Coilstone, The Stillwater Flame, Wailing Essence Vial, Duskroot Fang Artifact, Glassseed of Vey'lan...

Hidden Game Achievement: The Pitculler.

Rules of the game:

Abilities Allowed.

Flight banned...External Items besides tokens are banned.

Nocrix Credit can be earned by eliminating players. (1000 NC each)

Placement within the starting pit is random.

The pit's walls have ridges, single stairsteps, and hovering rotating platforms positioned randomly.

The game has a one-hour time limit.

Escape the Pit or be devoured by it.

The first to reach the surface wins the game.

The moment a player reaches the surface, the pit will start closing in slowly. Anyone who remains behind shall perish.

Good luck to all Nocturnal Rifters//

"Wailing Bone Pit..." Levi murmured. "A climbing-based death game with thirty-plus Rifters, and a brutal mechanic that kills anyone who has not reached the surface... sounds ominous."

"What do you think?" Ash'Kral asked.

"I don't know yet; I have to do some research on the game."

Levi planned to spend the upcoming week preparing. Although he knew his life was guaranteed in the game, he wasn't joining for the giggles.

He wanted to win it; he needed to win it... especially when he was putting a map fragment up as a participation ticket.

All Rifters were required to put one in the pot... the winner took the pot home while the losers counted themselves lucky if they survived another day.

Of course, the required map fragments increased based on rank to ensure an appropriate pot for the winner.

At the moment, Levi owned only five map fragments, given to him by the program as an initial kickstart... if he lost them all, he would need to purchase them or obtain them in other ways.

Since Ash'Kral refused to hand over his little island, Levi couldn't sell it as map fragments even if he wanted to.

Also, he wanted to win it for the prize pool. They might be low-grade, but for Levi, who was just beginning his journey, they were a must-have.

"Wailing Bone Pit..."

Levi narrowed his eyes as he searched for the game's name in the dimensional network. What came up sent a shiver down his spine.

It was brutal scenes of dozens of Rifters climbing a dimly lit abyss, harrowing ghostly wails echoing from the bottom.

Explosions, screams, dusty clouds, barriers flaring or cracking apart... Rifters falling into the embrace of the wailing pit, their terrified cries forcing the rest to climb faster while shielding themselves.

Yet what scared Levi most were the hidden, unexpected traps.

In each iteration of the game, a different trap appeared: shifting platforms, vicious worms emerging from the walls, the wailing pit spitting out burning acidic black tar, and many more.

Those additions kept the same game fresh for the watchers, especially when neither they nor the Rifters had any clue about them!

"Death Games... they left nothing to the imagination." Levi sucked in a cold, deep breath. "Everything wants you dead: the game design, the opponents, the watchers, the Gamemaster... It's up to the Rifter to ascend above it all and emerge victorious."

If it weren't for the Nocturn's Pardon, Levi doubted he would have dared to participate this early.

Fortunately, the Wailing Bone Pit focused on endurance, preparation, and intelligence...Levi was going to give it his all for the next week.

"Ash'Kral, I'm going to need that dimensional key," Levi said, his tone solemn.

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Sometime later...

Levi could be seen far, far away from the capital city in an empty forest. He had already scanned the area and found no one nearby.

He summoned Ash'Kral, who muttered the incantation to open his Boundless Domain.

The dimensional key wasn't a physical object... it was a specific incantation acting as an activation key.

Once he finished, a shadowy nocturnal contract manifested before them. It expanded into the shape of a door... without Levi needing to do anything, the spatial portal opened into a rippling mirror, reflecting a tiny floating piece of land in the middle of nothingness.

The portal shifted and vibrated so intensely that Levi's echolocation couldn't help but reveal it.

Levi took a deep breath and stepped through the portal, his feet touching firm ground on the other side. The rest of him followed inside.

A moment later, the door-like contract shrank to its original size and burned by black flames into nothingness.

Immediately after, the atmosphere and gravity shifted drastically from Earth's laws to the pre-decided rules set by Ash'Kral.

They weren't human-friendly in the slightest.

Thud!

Levi's body smashed against the ground; his mouth foamed, and not an ounce of air reached his lungs.

Seeing this, Ash'Kral swiftly adjusted the domain's parameters to match Earth's gravity and atmosphere.

The moment the order went through, Levi began coughing up his lungs in a kneeling position, his face drained of color.

"Ash'Kral!!!"

"Cough... don't blame me; I keep forgetting you humans are too fragile at the start, and it's been a while since I came here," Ash'Kral coughed sheepishly.

Levi's expression remained dark, uncaring about excuses... he had almost f*cking died in the middle of nowhere.

But he realized he shared some responsibility... he knew Ash'Kral was unreliable in such situations, and it was up to him to check.

So he kept his curses to himself and used his echolocation to analyze the island. Then he remembered Ash'Kral possessed omnipotent authority here...meaning he could help Levi see.

Just as Levi was about to ask, Ash'Kral shook his head. "Forget about it; my level of omnipotence is at the bare minimum. I can reform the island, change its atmosphere and gravity, but that's it."

"I can't add new staff, give myself new powers, recreate items or treasures...nothing beyond that."

"Ah... I remember now."

Levi smiled bitterly, recalling he'd read something about this in the five-hundred-page contract... his eagerness to see had clouded his memory. Maybe he didn't want to remember it, hoping for a different answer.

Alas...

Nocturn wasn't foolish enough to give perfect omnipotence to every territory owner. There were levels...from O1 to O10... each unlocking more access and freedom in one's territory (O for Omnipotence).

The levels could rise or fall depending on many variables: Nocturnal Ring rank, outside reputation, staff status under Nocturn's authority, size of territory, and more.

At the same time, breaking the rules could lower or strip one's Omnipotence entirely.

Ash'Kral's Omnipotence level was O1...the lowest form of access.

"This island has been crafted by the cheapest hundred map fragments," Ash'Kral chuckled. "Attica won it in a bet and wrote it under my name as a joke since she already had a bigger territory at the time."

"You're telling me this isn't even yours?"

"Of course not. Why would I buy this crap? I had a territory spanning a hundred thousand kilometers... this little rock means nothing to me."

"Then give it to me."

"No. I'm not a monster... it's a gift."