

Evolution 117

Chapter 117: The Celesial's Ascent.

Days passed in silence...

Levi sat alone at his dorm room window, legs dangling over the back garden. He was feeding his seed under the natural sunlight while simultaneously using it as a healing meditation.

However, once in a while, his hands trembled as though still feeling the weight of every life he'd ended.

He hadn't slept more than an hour at a time, nightmares dragging him back to the Pit... Thornlily's hollow eyes, Stonebite's shattered ribs, Ssek-Varr's agonizing howls, and every wail of bone and tar. Even his echolocation betrayed him, picking up phantom sobs in the wind.

At first, he tried to bury the guilt beneath training: endless exercises and sparring fights with upper-year trainees... But sweat and muscle ache couldn't drown the hollow ache in his gut.

He found himself living in the past, even when he hadn't signed in the dimensional network even once after the game.

The title, the rewards, the stats, everything... Levi hadn't checked them once. He even refused to check how many Rifters died in the pit.

In his eyes, it didn't matter if it were ten or all of them... No difference, the pain was the same.

Although Levi knew that he had done nothing wrong, as everyone in the game had joined with the same mindset of survival above all, the guilt refused to fade away.

But, he didn't let it affect his mental state for too long... He understood that it was a sign of a healthy conscience, and that healing would take time.

Still, he preferred being in this situation rather than showing mercy.

For he had learned the hardest lesson of all: victory without mercy left mental scars deeper than any blade, but he would rather have scars than actual wounds.

As for his brother, friends, and Instructor Seraphis? They seemed to have picked up on Levi's change, but no one asked him about what happened besides Arthur.

Levi told him that he was going through something and he would be alright after some time. He didn't want his little brother to worry over nothing.

Hearing this, Arthur could only drop the matter while assuring Levi that he was always there if he wanted to talk.

But Levi knew there was no need...

What happened was nothing but a start, and if he wanted to continue treading on this path and avoid getting forsaken by Ash’Kral, he knew what to do... Weakness must not be shown.

Thus, after giving himself a couple of days to grieve the death of a piece of his soul, Levi painted a serene smile on his face and said:

"This is the first and last time... Either toughen yourself, or perish."

He said it to himself, but it seemed like Ash’Kral was the one saying it. Levi wanted him to understand that he was in it for the long run, regardless of what happened to him, his soul, or humanity.

The fated night refused to leave his heart, and Levi wasn’t planning on giving up anytime soon.

‘You might want to check the dimensional network.’ Ash’Kral smiled, wanting to put this matter at the back of their minds, ‘You sure have left a great first impression as you would have hoped.’

‘Is that so?’

Levi cracked a smile while jumping back into the room... Then, he sat on his bed, deciding to return to the Nocturn’s Heart city.

After he sat down on the same bench in the park, Levi pulled out the dimensional network and started typing his nickname on the search browser.

Surprisingly, the moment he typed Three Body, his character was one of the first to pop out with thousands of search results!

For a total newbie on his first game, such attention was too rare. But Levi did deserve it after not only eliminating two Newbie Hunters, but also doing it most spectacularly.

"Wow... My move is sure hyped up, a lot."

Levi raised an eyebrow in surprise after noticing his move had been clipped and scoring more than four hundred million clicks in less than four days.

When he read its title, his lips couldn't help but twitch.

—The Celestial's Ascent!—

—What a freaking move! I can understand high rankers pulling it off with the assistance of their powers, but this... This is crazy... Instant fan!—

—None of you understand just how much calculation that move requires. A single miscalculation and the Celestial would have been thrown backward, into a platform, his hands slipping, and the list goes on! A genius is behind that disguise!—

—Based on his form, I believe he must be either a Human, an Elf, a Triton, or such... Though it's highly likely he is a Human or a Sleepwalker... The weapon gives it a way.—

To make it worse, most of the comments were hyping him up as the Celestial; rarely did a few use the Three Body Problem... In fact, the Pitculler was getting more love than his original nickname.

'What's wrong with my original nickname?' He murmured, disgruntled.

'Too damn long.' Ash'Kral replied lazily, 'People want fast, short, and explosive... No one has the time to utter a damn sentence as a nickname.'

'Well, I thought they would shorten it and call me the Problem or something.' Levi smiled wryly.

'You should feel happy with the Celestial. It is insanely rare to be bestowed a positive nickname by the program's community on one's first game... Don't even mention such an overbearing nickname.'

'Celestial, huh...' Levi shook his head, 'Everyone will be having insane expectations of me in each game. I know, the moment I fail, this nickname will be used to mock me.'

Levi refused to name himself such nicknames before, understanding that the more grandiose one's nickname, the more expectations were placed on them to perform.

He had no interest in such rewardless pressure... Unfortunately, he was fated to wear the Celestial nickname proudly from the moment he was crowned until the day he became one, or fell from grace.

As Levi kept scrolling through the comments section, reading through many encouragements, fan requests to start a Rifter Society for them to join, and many other positive comments, he finally landed on a hater.

Though he kinda agreed with him.

—Pfff... Calling someone a Celestial because of his mask and a cool move while knowing that he is playing at the bottom of the ranks... Have your standards gone to shit?—

'That's what I thought... Finally, someone with common sense.' Levi chuckled, unbothered in the slightest.

In his eyes, if he were to prove himself more, he might be deserving of the nickname, but being called as such after his first game? It was a bit too much.

Too bad, it had already stuck.

Soon, Levi closed the search browser and opened his profile interface; his smile faded a bit.

Nocturnal Ring Profile Interface:

Profile Name: Three Body Problem.

Current Rank: Homeless (300GP required for promotion)

Total Game Points (GP): – 180

Total Wins: – 1(The Wailing Bone Pit)

Total Losses: – 0

Winstreak: – Null

Map Fragments Owned: – 35 (Desolate)

Territory Units (TU): – Null

Games Played: – 1

Privileges Unlocked: – Pitculler's Privileges(inactive)

Next Rank Requirements: – 120 GP

Achievements: – Pitculler: be the sole survivor in any Pit-based death game.

Profile Title: – Pitculler(Inactive)

After seeing his newly filled-out profile, Levi wanted to feel delighted by his achievements, but this was the problem in his eyes.

It wasn't normal to feel happy about trampling on people's lives, just because the rewards were noteworthy... But he didn't want to go through this fight again about the morality of his situation.

In his eyes, the moment he won his first game, he gave up the right to criticize the system, for he was part of it as well, willingly joining it.

He could hate it, even want to destroy it, but as long as he was part of it, it was hypocritical to judge others for what he was doing as well.

Though it was different for the CRS Platform... That was forced upon his entire planet, which was a separate matter altogether.

'I won about one hundred and seventy game points.' Levi murmured, 'Which is quite a lot... I need only one more successful game or two for my promotion.'

Levi had read about the points allocation system in detail. But to summarize it... It was like this:

Match Victory ... +50 pts

Finalist Bonus ... +20 pts

Title's Boon ... +100 pts (once a game)

Participation ... +10 pts

Defeat ... -20 pts

Gamemaster Penalty... minimum -20 pts.

Levi had earned all four points allocations from his first game, amounting to a total of one hundred and eighty... This was indeed a lot compared to the average Rifter, whose balance was more in the red than green.

Fortunately, there was no rank demotion under Teraowner.

The moment a Rifter turned into a territory owner, he could either continue his climb or retire forever in the Boundless Expense... Of course, the location mattered the most.

'I should leave the next game after I finish Blood Hunters' raid, and maybe become a Raider and graduate from the Training Center.' Levi uttered calmly, 'Only then will I have the freedom to do what I want for most of my time.'

Right now, Levi's time was held hostage by the Training Center until he was given a Daywalker ID.

While this didn't matter much in his first game since he possessed a Nocturn's Pardon, Levi couldn't risk going in his second game without ample preparations... Such preparation required him to train in Ash'Kral's little island as well as increase his current strength.

He had no plans to keep his strength low at all times for the sake of weaker enemies. It was a must at the beginning to get a taste, but it shouldn't be a habit...

After all, his strength was more important in real life than the Nocturnal Ring.

Soon, Levi pressed on the Pitculler's title privileges, showing him a small list of benefits.

—Pitculler: As the sole survivor of a pit-based death game, the Rifter is awarded a 0.5% discount for each participant on Nocturn's Infinity Shop. (The discount is applied to items limited to the Rifter's current rank.)—

'15% discount on the Infinity Shop ain't so bad.' Levi murmured.

He understood that each game had a unique title with certain privileges... The harsher the conditions, the better the privileges.

15% discount might not seem like much, but Levi knew that it was applied across all ranks and their treasures... He only needed to reach such ranks first.

'I should have some Nocrix stored after what happened in the pit.'

Levi went to check his bank account, just to find the Nocrix credits earned from the game already wired into it.

He couldn't help but suck a deep, cold breath after seeing how much he earned... A whole twenty thousand Nocrix Credits!

A thousand credits for each dead Rifter, whose death was inflicted by Levi's win.

The rest of the dead Rifiers under other Rifiers' hands paid Levi nothing... But, this finally gave Levi a number of lives he affected in the game.

However, he didn't show a sad expression or such; he said that he was beyond it, and the only way to prove it was to keep moving forward... Even if he had to fake it.

"With the amount you gave me or what remained of it, I have now about twenty-three thousand credits..."

Levi swiftly opened the Infinity Shop, wanting to see what he could buy with this kind of cash on him.

'Ah... I forgot, I can't buy any now.'

Alas, his dreams were dashed after recalling that only Teraowners had access to the dimensional delivery system.

Since opening portals and such consumed spatial energy, and it was a valuable resource, the Rattoki Clan, part of the Murinori race, ensured that it wasn't wasted wantonly.

They were responsible for the banking system, the delivery system, the infrastructure, and such... One could say they were the backbone of the Boundless Expense.

Hence, Teraowners were given minimum access to the Delivery Services, and it increased with the Rifter's rank, ensuring a healthy and fair system.

'Becoming a Teraowner is the goal for now... But first, I have a raid to prepare for.'