

HELL DIFFICULTY TUTORIAL

Chapter 5

[You have defeated a Wolf - lvl 2]

[Lvl 0 > Lvl 1]

After resting against the tire of the bus for a few minutes, I receive a message indicating that the wolf had finally died. Either it succumbed to its wounds or another animal finished it off. Well, at least I got enough experience to level up.

[Name: Nathaniel Gwyn]

Difficulty: Hell

Floor: 1

Time left until forced return: 4y 364d 23h 12m 3s

Lvl 1

Strength: 6

Dexterity: 8

Constitution: 3

Mana: 2

[Primary Class: Unavailable]

[Sub-class: Unavailable]

Skills:

Focus - lvl 3

Mana manipulation - lvl 1

[Skill Points: 0]

[Stat Points:

3]

I got three stat points, and my level changed. Also, somehow my Mana and Dexterity went up by 1 point each.

One hour. I can't believe we have been here for that short time. Somehow it feels much longer.

I try touching the holographic window with my finger, but nothing happens. My finger just passes through.

"Stat explanation."

Nothing.

Haaaa. Not again.

I am too tired for this. I'm sure there will be some gamers on the bus so I can make them do all the work, but for now, there is one stat I can't go wrong with.

"Put 1 stat point into Constitution," I try, and one stat point disappears. Huh? It actually worked.

Now I try to focus and think about wanting to put 1 stat point into Constitution. It takes a moment, but then I get a feeling as if someone is asking me for confirmation, but in my mind. It's unsettling but I send back something like a thought version of "yes," and another point disappears. This could be useful.

I quickly add the last remaining point into Constitution and close the status window.

Now back to stats.

Strength and dexterity should be self-explanatory, and Constitution should be something like endurance, vitality, health, or an all-in-one stat. Hopefully, it will help me heal faster or require less rest.

There is no need to be greedy for power or speed. As I already noticed, I can level up my stats even without stat points, and survival is most important at the moment.

I don't know if it's the placebo effect, but I already feel better. Well, let's wait and find out.

Now, mana.

I already used mana to strengthen my body. I think.

The movement I showed while fighting the wolf should have been impossible for a 1-hour younger me. It could be Focus, it could be Mana manipulation, or both. If I learn how to control it, it will increase my chances of survival.

Okay, I will figure it out later.

My name. Somehow, the system knows my real name. The best thing I can do at the moment is to be prepared to not be surprised if some of my private information pops up out of nowhere.

Freezing from the surprise in the middle of a dangerous situation can be deadly, so for now, let's think that the entity controlling the system knows everything about me. While we are here, I need to let go of my life on Earth and focus on surviving here.

It might be pretty drastic, but I am at the mercy of the entity, system, and the only sensible thing is to focus on surviving.

It's better to think that I will be stranded here for five more years, and that's long enough for people to declare us dead.

Let's forget about everyone on earth - my family, my friends, everyone. There will be time to grieve or celebrate after I get forcibly returned, so it's better to be pleasantly surprised than any other option.

Well, it's not like there are that many people I care about. To be honest, the list may be really short.

The most important thing at the moment is my survival, and I can't let anything distract me.

Let's use other passengers as well. I should act fairly friendly but distant enough, at the same time, I can't let them use me. I need to act a bit more distant. I can also put on a strong front. If I set it upright, it will be a nice combination of give and take, with me taking more than giving.

For a second, a thought flashes through my mind - would it be possible to level up by killing them? This time I think about it a bit longer but decide against it in the end. I started with lvl 0, and others are most likely the same. Even if it's possible to level up by killing people, I am lvl 1 at the moment, and I would most likely need to kill most of them. If it's even possible to gain experience from lvl 0 or a human.

It might be even on purpose that everyone is level zero.

Also, I already decided on using them - well, at least from the start and until I collect more data or become stronger, so let's not go this way.

Sounds good.

Good.

I take the shirt off my chest, and I don't know if it's just me, but the wound already looks better.

Another thing from the status is the word "forced" return. If I had to say, it means that there is a way to return to earth without waiting for 5 years. Not a forced way of returning.

But...

Do I even want to?

Well, probably yes, as it's much safer that way, however...

...

Later... I will reflect on that later.

The Floor 1 part in the status is interesting as well. It means there are more floors, and if I think about it as a game, we will have to fill out some requirements to move to a lower or upper floor, or we will be moved there after some time. Maybe after 5 years? That doesn't sound right - we never went to another floor, so we don't have any place to return to. The only fitting place to return to is Earth.

Let's collect more info first and then think about it again.

The level number in my status is probably only showing how many times I got 3 stat points. But it can be useful in another way as well. Maybe I will need to be at a certain level to be able to do something, or it's just some kind of strength measurement.

The difficulty is pretty disturbing - Hell.

In games, the difficulties are usually categorized as easy, normal, and hard, with "hell" representing the most challenging level. Therefore, I must be extremely cautious. When facing an enemy, I need to make sure to not underestimate them, even if they appear weaker.

I am also curious why I got this difficulty, which may be the hardest one, but at the moment, I have no way of finding out. There is also the possibility that there is an even harder difficulty, but no way of confirming it at the moment, or at least I don't know about any.

Classes sound interesting, but I don't have the option to pick one. There may be special requirements or I need to level up more.

It is already clear that the system knows a lot about me, and it's highly possible that I am being watched by it even at the moment. It doesn't even have to be someone personally watching over me, just some kind of program writing down my actions and thoughts.

Now when I think about it, even the process of leveling up is kind of weird. I have an idea of how it works in games, but being stuck in this situation makes me want to think about it a bit more logically.

There is a possibility that leveling up is just a reward from the entity/system for killing the monster. Meaning that I got granted stat points by it after fulfilling the requirements of leveling up.

Another option is that I got stat points by killing the wolf - the wolf died, and its life force or something similar to it got transferred to me and probably to the guy with the gun. Possibilities are that its life force got split between the two of us. Another one is that we humans need more life force than the wolf to get to lvl 2. The third possibility I can think of is waste during the transfer of its life or the system taking a "cut."

I like the possibilities with life force more. They sound a bit more logical, and I always liked to think of magic as science we don't understand.

Taking a deep breath, I slowly stand up, but fortunately, my head doesn't spin, and I feel pretty good all things taken.

It's time to socialize and find someone useful.

Chapter 6

What welcomes me inside the bus is a bunch of people absentmindedly staring into the air. Well, some of them are discussing.

"Fuck you, I will not go into that goddamn forest! You go there if you want to die that much!"

Calmly discussing the situation we are in.

It looks like the wolf scared them as all of them are inside, using the bus as shelter.

It's easy to understand why, but I already know that we can't stay here for too long.

The main problem is water and food. It's only been around an hour since we arrived, but I already feel thirsty and hungry, most likely because of the energy I used.

Even if they are not hungry at the moment and have a bottle of water with them or a little bit of food, soon they will need to look for more.

"So you're back," the man with the gun comes towards me and falls silent for a moment, watching the bus driver conversing with two adult men. He then looks at me, "You good?"

I nod. I have already put my white shirt on. Ehm, my formerly white shirt. I guess it's red now.

"We will need some water and maybe food and it would be best if we look for it before sunset," he says directly.

He seems to be on the calm side, and from the way he watches other people, I can say that he is in a better state than most others.

Anyway, he should have a good impression of me as well. Hopefully. Well, maybe not that good. In his eyes, I might be a suicidal lunatic.

He looks at me for a whole minute, with a deep discerning stare as if he's trying to see inside my head.

His stare makes me slightly nervous, especially knowing that he should have leveled up as well. Who knows what skills did he get or how did he use his stat points.

"Soo, how many bullets do you have left?" I break the silence.

"..." He once again falls silent and looks at me, a slight smile slowly appears on his face.

"Not too many." There is a hint of amusement and warmth in his voice.

"I see."

So careful and not too trusting type.

He is slightly shorter than me. His figure is pretty robust and muscular, with a sense of authority around him. It might be caused by his gun, but I don't believe that's just it.

A cop? Maybe.

"Nathaniel." I reach out my hand towards him, and he accepts. His grip is strong, and he looks into my eyes while shaking my hand.

Like I do to him, he is also judging me.

"Hadwin." he says.

I notice a few people staring at us, but I ignore them for now.

"Did you also level up?"

"Yes," the bus quiets down, and I can see them listening to us. "I already used my stat points. One of the kids told me to do so," he nods towards the school kids. "It's crazy when you think about it. Us appearing in the middle of nowhere, two suns, gigantic wolf..." He smiles awkwardly while looking around.

When he looks back at me his smile is gone.

"You know," he starts, and I can see that he is trying to find the right words. "I thought about it, and I think we should look around. We will need water soon and we might find out something about this place."

I can tell what's going to be next.

"Do you want to join me?" His eyes seem honest and firm as he asks me to risk my life.

So shameless.

"Sure, let's go."

Short pause.

He slowly brushes his hair off his forehead and his muscles tense a little bit. After a few seconds, he relaxes his body and a quiet sigh escapes his mouth.

"To be honest, I pretty much expected you to decline," he says.

"I gave it some thought." I shrug my shoulders. "We should look around while we are not starved or dehydrated. Logically, it will be harder the later we go."

"It's not about logic... People don't tend to think logically in situations like this..." Another sigh escapes his mouth. "I see... Well, I guess you are one of these guys..."

I feel like I should be insulted, but I let it go.

I kind of like the way this goes.

Let's put it all on Hadwin.

Yup.

I like it.

"Others should keep watch while we look around." He quickly gives a few orders, and I can see that he has already talked to a few people, and they seem to respect him enough to follow his orders.

It's the gun.

I bet it is because of the gun.

Obviously, some of them seem dissatisfied with the guy with a gun leaving them to go into the forest, but no one says anything. Most likely, they are scared that he will ask them to go with him.

I am not too surprised at their lack of initiative. It's weirder that Hadwin and I plan to go there without being pressured to do so.

Hadwin grabs his backpack and two iron pipes, clearly inspired by me. He gives me one, and I take it.

Some of the passengers see it and start talking amongst themselves, and I see some of them trying to pry out their own pipes.

What's with that reaction time? As we are about to leave the bus someone stops us.

"Do you have a spot?"

On the bus, there are a few 30-40-year-old men, and the one asking is one of them. He is close to 2m in height and slim, but his shoulders are surprisingly wide. His face is on the handsome side, and he is smoothly shaven.

"Maybe..." Hadwin stops next to me

"Damon," he reaches his hand towards Hadwin and then towards me.

His grip is even stronger than Hadwin's. Hadwin's shake was just a greeting, but Damon's is clearly some sort of test as he squeezes my hand as strongly as he can.

As he lets go of my hand, his gaze stays on me a bit longer than on Hadwin.

"I would like to join you. I grew up in the countryside, so I shouldn't be baggage inside the forest."

A laugh almost escapes my mouth, but I keep my face neutral.

Well, in the worst case, we can use him as bait. Something tells me that Hadwin wouldn't like it, but I can work around it.

"Sounds good," says Hadwin, and I just nod. Damon once again looks into my eyes.

Look at him.

I feel amused as his look isn't too friendly, more like the opposite.

As we exit the bus, no one else joins us. No one is brave or desperate enough to come with us. Not yet.

Well, almost no one. I saw one of the school kids wanting to join us, but others stopped him. Well, I call them kids but all of them are around 18 years old, not that much younger than me.

Bless you, kid.

Maybe next time?

After something eats Damon.