

Chapter -92

Unlike the first time it appeared, time completely froze the second time the Adjudicator arrived within the can store. Bee had been in the middle of turning towards me on the shelf she sat atop, and a can labeled ‘Tuna Ice-Cream’ was stuck in mid-air from where it’d fallen off as she moved.

WHEN I SAID WE WOULD MEET AGAIN, I DID NOT EXPECT IT TO BE THIS SOON.

“Sorry about that,” Panda remarked.

**IT IS CONFOUNDING THAT THE SYSTEM WOULD OFFER YOU THESE CHOICES
FOR YOUR EVOLUTION.**

**IT IS A FIRST IN THE GREAT GAME THAT SUCH POWER HAS BEEN GIVEN TO A
PLAYER.**

“Are you here to take it away from me?” I asked.

I BELIEVE I MADE MY POSITION ON SUCH THINGS CLEAR PREVIOUSLY.

WHAT THE SYSTEM GRANTS IS NOT FOR ME TO DECIDE.

I EXIST ONLY TO UPHOLD THE INTEGRITY OF THE GREAT GAME.

“Then you’re here to help us decide the rule we want to implement, right?” Panda concluded.

**INDEED. EVEN THE SYSTEM ITSELF HAS APPLIED BASIC LIMITATIONS TO THIS
POWER. THESE ARE AS FOLLOWS:**

- NO UNFAIR RULES: NEW RULES MUST AFFECT EVERYONE EQUALLY.

**- NO DISRUPTING THE GREAT GAME: THIS MEANS NO REMOVING OR
PREVENTING GAME EVENTS.**

**- NO POWER-UPS: NEW RULES CANNOT GIVE ANYONE EXTRA POWER OR ITEMS
TO HELP THEM PROGRESS.**

“Everything else is fair game?” I asked.

NO.

**I WILL DETERMINE WHETHER OR NOT YOUR NEW RULE VIOLATES THE
GAME’S INTEGRITY.**

**YOU WILL DECIDE UPON YOUR NEW RULE NOW AND ONCE WE HAVE REACHED
AN AGREEMENT, IT WILL BE LOCKED INTO YOUR ABILITY AND APPLIED
IMMEDIATELY.**

“...Seriously?”

“Yeah that seems a bit strict.”

WOULD YOU RATHER I TAKE AWAY THIS ULTIMATE ABILITY?

“No...”

FRET NOT.

WE HAVE AN ETERNITY TO COME TO AN AGREEMENT.

**WHILE WE SPEAK, THE ENTIRE CONTAINED UNIVERSE, WITHIN WHICH YOUR
PLANET RESIDES, IS LOCKED IN TIME.**

**WHEN WE REACH AN AGREEMENT ON YOUR NEW RULE, I WILL RESUME TIME.
UNTIL THEN, LET US DISCUSS.**

“Ugh.”

It felt like weeks passed while Panda and I thought up different ideas. I really hated that Bee couldn’t be a part of the decision-making, since she had a beautiful mind and would probably figure out something brilliant. Alas, the Adjudicator firmly declined to allow her into our conversation and thus she remained frozen in time, half-turning towards me while a can of horrifically-flavored ice-cream was mid-fall.

Our first idea had been to get rid of all Agencies, but it was shot down immediately, since it was deemed a power-up to Players. It would also interfere with how the broadcasting of the Great Game was done.

Dozens of our ideas, which we spent a long time coming up with, were shot down by the same rule, as they were considered power-ups, even when super minor, like, ‘everyone gets a packet of Fusion Gum’.

I’d also tested out the idea of giving all Players the ability to perceive things that were normally only visible if you had 75% Insanity or higher, but that was also considered a power-up. Taking away the feature of linking a Familiar’s survival to its owner was also shot down, as were removing Familiars altogether.

“You hear that Lordie? I can’t get rid of you, even if I wanted...”

“*Me-ow.*”

“What about World Bosses, Roaming Bosses, things like that?” Panda wondered. “Can we add those in?”

YES.

**WOULD YOU LIKE TO IMPLEMENT A NEW RULE THAT INTRODUCES
ADDITIONAL BOSSES TO THE OVERWORLD?**

“No,” I quickly said.

“So we can add demerits, not positives... interesting.”

“Is there a way we can spin a demerit in our favor?” I wondered, readjusting my seat on the throne of cans I’d made.

For some reason I could interact with the frozen world around me, but I was fairly sure it’d return to its original position once time resumed.

“*Meow?*”

“No, I don’t know why you’re not frozen, Lordie.”

The mouth on the sphere floating above the inverted pyramid closed around the eye within, as though performing a slow blink. The Adjudicator seemed puzzled, as he asked:

**HOW DID YOU UNDERSTAND THE LORD’S HAND’S SPEECH. IT SHOULD BE
UNINTELLIGIBLE TO HUMANS.**

“It’s just like, a feeling. Y’know?”

NO, I DO NOT KNOW.

**THE SOUND IT PRODUCES IS MEANT TO BURN THE SYNAPSES OF YOUR BRAIN.
YOU SHOULD BE STEADILY LOSING YOUR FACULTIES UNTIL YOU EITHER DIE
OR IT MATURES.**

**INSTEAD, YOU ARE CONVERSING WITH IT, LIKE IT IS YOUR COMPANION, AND
NOT AN IMMINENT THREAT TO YOUR LIFE.**

“Have you never had a pet before? My last pet was a bullfrog named Kevin. I could usually tell what he wanted based on how he croaked, even though I couldn’t understand the sounds.”

THE CONCEPT OF PETS IS FOREIGN TO ME.

**I WOULD LIKE TO EXPERIENCE THIS PHENOMENON FOR MYSELF HOWEVER.
WHERE WOULD I GO ABOUT FINDING A KEVIN?**

“You should get a pet then. It can really be anything. I guess for someone like you, a pet could even be a human, although probably most people would die if they spent too much time in your presence.”

THAT IS A PROBLEM INDEED.

YOU HOWEVER ARE RESILIENT.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE MY PET ONCE YOU DIE?

**I AM ALLOWED TO RESURRECT PLAYERS IF THEY ARE DEEMED USEFUL FOR
AIDING IN MY WORK.**

**MY SUPERVISOR WOULD NOT QUESTION ME HAVING A GAMBIT FOLLOWING
ME AROUND, SINCE YOU ARE A GLITCH IN THE SYSTEM AND THUS A USEFUL
SOURCE OF INFORMATION.**

“Sorry, I don’t plan on dying.”

**ALL MORTALS DIE EVENTUALLY.
I WILL WAIT UNTIL IT HAPPENS TO YOU AND POSE THE QUESTION ONCE MORE.**

“Gambit, stop small-talking with the extra-dimensional Arbiter of Fates and let’s figure this Rule out.”

I thought about it for a bit, then asked, “Can we change the wait time until the next Event?”

**YOU ARE NOT ALLOWED TO INCREASE THE INTERVAL BEFORE THE NEXT
EVENT, BUT YOU MAY SHORTEN IT.**

“Why don’t we shorten it to 1 Day?” I asked.

“It would allow you to reach level 21 sooner,” Panda agreed. “But wouldn’t that be considered giving you an advantage?”

**ALL PLAYERS WOULD BE ABLE TO REACH LEVEL TWENTY-ONE AFTER
FINISHING THE EVENT, THUS IT IS NOT AN UNFAIR ADVANTAGE.
IT DOES NOT POSE AS A BOON TO ALL PLAYERS, NOR DOES IT INTERFERE WITH
THE GREAT GAME, AS THE WAIT TIMES BETWEEN EVENTS ARE CAUSED BY A
‘HUMANE EXTINCTION’ TREATY.**

WOULD YOU LIKE TO MAKE YOUR RULE THE FOLLOWING?

“Shorten the wait until the Second Game Event down to 24 hours”

Panda and I shared a glance.

He nodded.

I nodded.

Lordie wriggled.

Brock seemed left out, so he squeaked a little.

**VERY WELL.
THE NEW RULE SHALL BE IMPLEMENTED HEREUPON THIS VERY MOMENT.**

“Before you go,” I said, as the pink light pillar began to surround him. “What’s your name?”

MY CREATOR NAMED ME:

**“THE BREEZE THAT TRANSCENDS MOMENTS AND GATHERS COSMIC DUST
UPON A WEIGHING SCALE OF BONE”**

“That’s quite a mouthful,” Panda muttered, though he seemed unsurprised.

I didn’t skip a beat and said, “See you later, Breezy.”

**PLEASE ALLOW ME SOME TIME BEFORE YOU CAUSE ANOTHER ISSUE FOR ME
TO RESPOND TO.**

“No promises.”

And with *that*, the pillar absorbed the Adjudicator and whisked him away.

Time immediately resumed and my throne of cans vanished, while the can of Tuna Ice-Cream hit the floor with the sound of a squelchy and metallic *bonk*.

Bee finished turning around.

“Where did the lights go? Where’s the Adjudicator?”

“Err, he sort of came and went, using some time-manipulation shenanigans,” I explained.

“Aw, I missed it!?”

“You ought to sit down,” Panda told me. “Your whole body is glowing.”

Before I could even look down at myself, my legs lost all strength. Then it was like I’d gone diving with a car battery, as every muscle in my body tensed painfully. My vision went dark and spotty, as though I’d clenched my eyes as hard as I could, and my hearing was overtaken by the sound of my wisdom teeth getting forcefully broken free from my jaws, which was odd, since I’d already had them pulled out when I was a teen.

After a couple minutes, a personal announcement followed and my hearing returned along with my vision.

BING!

Class Evolution complete!

I uncurled from the fetal position, and stood up, turning this-and-that way to figure out what’d changed.

“Did I sprout any new limbs, or a tail, or anything??”

“Hm. Your right eye is weird,” Panda said.

“I think it looks cool,” Bee commented.

“What’s different about it!?”

“Also, all your Plugin Slots have been consolidated to the front of your torso,” Panda added, ignoring my pleading question. “And the Plugins look like floppy disks now.”

“What are those?” Bee asked.

I looked down at my chest. I hadn’t even noticed that the hole in my clavicle nor the ones on my back were gone. In their place was a disc-tray made from my flesh set into the top of my ribcage, within which were slotted three obsidian-black floppy disks with bone-white labels on them that stated their names: ‘unHaunt’, ‘unHero’, and ‘unVirtuous’.

“That seems a lot more prone to someone yanking them out during a fight,” I muttered, a bit disappointed.

“At least swapping will be easier,” Bee noted.

“That’s true.”

Before I could pull up my Status screen and inspect the damage, an achievement followed.

Congratulations! You have unlocked an achievement! ^x
<i>‘Evolved 2: The Evolving!’</i>
Evolved your Class for the second time!
<i>If your first Evolved Class was broken, then this one is straight up encroaching on GAME Administrator territory! I shudder to imagine what happens if you evolve again...</i>
<i>Why on earth would you even be given such immense power?? It’s truly absurd.</i>
<i>It seems that our attempts to prevent you from utterly destroying the GREAT GAME was at a loss, and we’re told the Adjudicator in charge of this Region has enjoyed your</i>

*company... Gods know what your New Rule will do to our
GAME.*

We will find a way to stop you, mark my words.

Reward: *‘Personal Rule’* ability

‘Personal Rule’ x

Passive

“Don’t you know who I am? I make the rules here!”

*Pick a new rule that only applies to you from the following
options:*

- Cheat Death once -*
- Take no fall damage -*
- Become untraceable -*
- Friendly Public Transport -*

Your choice can be altered every 24 hours.

*Your currently-active Personal Rule is visible on your
Appraisal.*

“Nice,” Panda said, while he read through the options.

I wanted to reply as well, but instead my mouth moved on its own and said, “*Game.newRule()*.”

A bunch of symbols and text moved past my eyes at hyper-speed, but I had the uncanny sense that it was a Terms & Service Agreement that I’d just automatically agreed to.

Just like Adjudicator Breezy had said, my New Rule was already locked in and it was applied immediately.

A red ripple, similar to the heat haze visible on the road in summer, moved out from my body and across the city beyond, quickly vanishing from sight.

“Woah,” Bee muttered in awe.

Then an announcement followed:

—Patreon-exclusive Copy—
—Kristoffer Pauly (aka “Dosei”)—

GREAT GAME ANNOUNCEMENT!

A new Rule has been implemented!

The wait period between the end of the First GAME Event and the Second has been reduced from 7 Days down to 24 Hours.