

## Chapter -31

The entrance to the Commentary Booth was a strange round door that I just pushed aside. The walls were like stacks of brown paper and were quite thick. Given that the exterior looked like a giant wasp hive, I was surprised to find that the interior was... normal? As I crossed the threshold of the doorway and walked through a short tunnel, I was met with a room full of screens in all forms: CRT, plasma, LED, etc. It basically looked like someone had dragged every monitor and TV from three different electronics stores and stacked them randomly in the room.

The screens were mounted with some kind of strange and stringy residue which seemed quite sticky, and they were even fastened upside-down to the ceiling with it. The way they were all kind of glued together created a weird amalgamated monstrosity of electronics. With all the screens positioned around the curvature of the wall, it gave quite a high-tech feel to the room, even if it was a total mismatch and there wasn't a single power cable in sight.

What's more, each screen showed a vantage above a Player, and, even as I watched, I saw several of them die, either by the hands of an Ambusher mantis nymph, another Player, or an 'Insanity Monster' like the Skinstealer. As each Player died, the screen flickered and showed a new vantage.

To make it all worse, in the center of the room, hovering above a raised podium with her rapid wings, was the Announcer, cackling and yelling at the things showed on the screens, while mocking the people who were all killed as entertainment.

I carefully pulled my Looking Glass out of my inventory and scanned her through the little bit of its lens that was still left.

Level 60	'Riii'	Announcer <sup>x</sup>
<p><i>“Thank you for the applause!”</i></p> <p><b>Job:</b> <i>GREAT GAME Announcer</i> <b>Affiliation:</b> <i>Broadcast Department</i></p> <p><i>Even though the Broadcast Department is primarily staffed with Spiders, they often hire charismatic and cruel Wasps, like this Fairyfly, to serve as their announcers. It also doesn't hurt that these Wasps enjoy their work so much that getting to make fun of Players dying is what they consider payment.</i></p>		

*Riii is but one amongst many similar Wasps currently spread across your world, hosting the **GAME EVENTS**. Although, saying that, she is crueller than most of her kind, which should tell you that you don't want to get on her bad side.*

*She thinks you are good broadcast material.*

Announcer Riii turned around to look at me, her small arms on her hips.

“I’ve been looking forward to this,” she said, casting me a sinister grin.

“What are you gonna do??” Panda asked, sounding very worried. The Announcer didn’t react to his voice, so I was certain she couldn’t see him.

“Did you like the Fusion Gum?” she asked, the grin growing wider.

“You sent me that? Why? You must’ve known I’d use it to come here and kill you.”

“Hah! Kill me!?”

“I don’t think she’s intimidated by you,” Panda unhelpfully explained.

I took a step towards her, but suddenly two dozen translucent-blue arms appeared from her back, as though she was some kind of weird Doc Octopus ripoff. I remembered how they’d pinned all the Players to their seats during the Event introduction, so I didn’t want to get too close without a proper plan in place.

“Take a seat,” she said, using one of her magical arms to pull a plastic chair over in front of me.

“Yeah, she’s definitely not taking you serious.”

I kicked the chair aside. “I don’t think you understand what I’m here for!”

“Yes, yes, you want to try and kill me. Boring.”

She pulled over another chair.

“Now sit down, your interview is starting in twenty seconds.”

“My... what??”

“I got you the Fusion Gum so you could unlock that special ability. How nice of me. Now. Sit. Down. I’ll break your arms and legs if you don’t.”

I gritted my teeth and squeezed the handle of Brock tightly, preparing for the inevitable confrontation.

“Would it be so bad to hear her out?” Panda suggested.

“What is wrong with you,” I hissed. “How could you even suggest that!?”

“Maybe you could get some important information out of her, like, for example, who is actually watching these games.”

*“I’d rather just get into the fightin’, I reckon,”* said Brock.

I sat down on the chair with a frustrated snarl. I wanted to beat the Announcer to a pulp, but Panda was right. This was a golden chance I couldn’t pass up. It was the first time I’d met someone high-ranked who was part of the Great Game’s agencies who actually wanted to talk.

“Good boy,” patronized Riii.

“Who’s watching all this play out and listening to your commentary?”

“Eh, you know...” she replied evasively, while using her many ethereal arms to pull things from the sides of the room over next to me, like a pull-out greenscreen, a potted cactus that was six feet tall, a lava lamp, an SNES, and a table with a happy meal scattered over top of it.

“What the fuck is this?” I asked, looking at the random junk as she deftly used her arms to set up the greenscreen behind me.

“Cultural junk, to identify your part of the world more easily.”

“This has nothing to do with Castleburg.”

Panda was already munching on the happy meal, though Riii didn’t seem to notice. “The fries are cold and soggy,” he said in disappointment.

“It’s not important. Anyway:”

Lights overhead suddenly came on, blinding me briefly, while applause filled the room and the Announcer hovered closer. A floating ball covered in eyes also suddenly appeared from out of nowhere.

**Welcome back to Riii’s ‘Confessions from a Player’!**

**Today we’re joined by one of the standout Players of the country known as ‘Massachusetts’!**

**That’s right, it’s ‘Gambit’, or as you know him: ‘the Insane Murder Machine’!**

Applause came from the empty room around us again, as though being emitted from the walls.

“Massachusetts is a state, not a country,” I corrected her. “Also, I’m not a Murder Machine.”

**Isn’t he just charming!?**

**Also the stats would disagree with you there! Thanks to your actions, 82 Players have already died! That’s quite a lot of blood on your hands, huh!**

Fake laughter came from around me. The revelation that I’d caused *that many* deaths actually didn’t really affect me, but, then again, it wasn’t really my fault if they didn’t die directly by my hand.

“Who the fuck is watching this shit??”

**The GREAT GAME, and its many independent shows like this, are of course viewed by all the Demons and Daemons of the Nine Realms of Vice, as well as the Spawn of the Great Ones, and their Masters!**

**Now, we’re all dying to know, how did you manage to survive not one, but two separate colored paths? The survival rate is currently 8% on the world of ‘Dirt’, an all-time low for the GREAT GAME!**

“...Demons are watching this? I guess I shouldn’t be surprised.”

“It actually makes an uncomfortable amount of sense when you think about it,” Panda remarked.

**Please answer the question!**

“I don’t know,” I lied. “I guess I just used my intuition.”

**That’s quite some intuition, I guess they don’t call you a cheater for nothing!**

**Next question:**

**Do you have a history of flashing people?**

**So far you have flashed 17 different Players and an untold number of GREAT GAME Agents!**

“What? No. It’s not my fault that I’m encouraged by my abilities to behave in stupid ways!”  
Laughter, whooping, and whistling filled the room in response.

**Of course you have a choice! You chose those abilities after all!**

**Now, we’re all dying to know:**

**Please tell us about your time before the GREAT GAME started on your world.**

**I understand that you were quite famous in your country of Massachusetts for your insane public meltdown!**

“Yeah... I’m not doing this,” I said and got up from the chair.

I locked eyes with Announcer Riii, who scowled at me for not playing along with her crazy talkshow bullshit.

**Keep watching!**

**It seems that ‘Gambit’ has chosen Suicide-by-Announcer, a fan favorite on this show!**

I surged forward with my Bonk Hammer raised above my head, then yelled, “*Punch.harder(!)*”

“*.interrupt()*,” said Riii, and my ability not only failed to activate, I also got hit with a pop-up notification:

**Warning!**

You have been interrupted and your ability is now on cooldown!

**Time remaining:** 1 minute 59 seconds

My swing whiffed as the Fairyfly pulled back a few inches, then I was lifted off the ground by three of her ghostly blue arms and slammed against the ceiling. All the air left my lungs, and I let out a loud groan as my broken ribs were forcefully shoved into my organs from behind.

“This is bad,” Panda remarked as he held onto my shoulder. “She can use **Glitched** abilities too, I think!”

A fourth hand flew at my head, while the other three kept me pinned against the paper-like ceiling. I was unable to avoid it, but when it hit my forehead, I didn’t feel any pain as it was immediately reflected with triple its speed. It flew back the way it’d come and smashed into the Announcer, the surprise making her let go with the three arms holding me aloft. Though she didn’t seem to really take any damage from it.

I rapidly fell back down to the floor, my trajectory sending me on a collision course with the six-foot-tall cactus, before I uttered the command that, despite its ridiculous nature, was one of my most-often used.

“*Unequip All!*”