



SYNOPSIS:

The conference of the conquerors of the five continents has begun – come, come, the discussion table has been readied. Infinite City has been decorated for the occasion, and the lord of Infinite City must also be dressed grandly for the occasion. *That way, this conference will be formal and solemn, right?*

“The Dictator of Life” – *who is that? I’ve never heard of him before! Oh, so he...*

1. Is the ultimate boss of Second Life,
2. Is an unmatched AI, in control of the whole of Second Life, so you could call him the God of Second Life,
3. Has developed free will, and...
4. Intends to rebel against humans by kicking out all the players from Second Life

Shit, if we can’t kill the Dictator of Life within twenty-one days, Second Life will be destroyed by the company and disappear forever...! Will Kenshin and Sunshine also disappear together with the game?

Within twenty-one days, the final plan to save Second Life by “launching our counterattack on the Northern Continent and killing the Dictator of Life” must be carried out!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Yu Wo:

Who am I? Sometimes I am like a warrior, wielding a sword on the battlefield with limitless passion and energy. At other times, I resemble a mage, with a mind devoted to research, completely absorbed in the things I like. Or I might be like a thief, leading a free and easy life, letting fate lead me to distant and unfamiliar lands. Occasionally, however I am similar to a priest, with a gentle heart, filled with compassion towards the living things of this world. Ultimately, I am a kindly Fantastical world

Great NPC Revolt

HALF PRINCE VOL. 6

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Chapter 1: Conference of the Five Overlords

Preparations began for the gathering of the overlords of the five continents. *Even if we lose in ability, we must not lose in spirit, for if we lose in spirit, we will lose face*, was what everyone was thinking. *No matter what, we have to give the people from the other continents a taste of the Central Continent's overwhelming enthusiasm!*

White Bird drifted gracefully toward me and requested my judgment, “My liege, we’ve decided to adorn Infinite City lavishly, so as to display Infinite City’s strong spirit to the other overlords. What is your opinion on this?”

“No problem, no problem,” I answered hastily. *Anyway, it's got nothing to do with me. If they'd like to turn the city gold, silver, or even rainbow colored, it's all up to them. Although, there's just this tiny little craving in me... Is it okay to make it pink?*

Upon hearing that, an extremely rare, kind smile appeared on White Bird’s face. *This—this... Why does this remind me of Yu Lian-dàsǎo so much?* A cold chill went down my spine and I had a feeling that something bad was about to happen. Just as this thought occurred to me, White Bird raised her hands and clapped twice. Suddenly a line of people appeared from both sides, each with a very weird object in hand. There was just one similarity between those weirdly shaped objects: they were all golden.

“Someone shut the doors!” White Bird shouted at the row beside her.

*Shut the doors? Don't tell me the next line is the legendary “let the dogs out”!*¹ I swallowed uneasily. *Could it be that White Bird has had enough of me and is going to set the dogs on? This... After the new patch, I wonder if it's possible for a player to get rabies.*

With a voice as low as a cello, White Bird slowly said, “Liege Lord, strip!”

I was stunned. *Strip?!* While I was still wondering if it was April Fools’ Day today and if White Bird had been sent to trick me, the row of people next to me started crowding around me... *Hey, hey, hey! Auntie on the left, why are you taking off my shirt? At my age, I could almost be your son! Ah, ah, the uncle on the right, my pants aren't where you should be touching!*

“No!” I cried out as I tried in vain to cover myself. Feeling violated, my eyes kept drifting toward White Bird, who seemed perfectly unconcerned with it all.

¹ “Shut the doors, let the dogs out.”: This a famous line from a Taiwan movie “九品芝麻官” that starred Stephen Chow. Meaning to enclose someone in one’s sphere of influence so as to beat the sh*t out of someone efficiently.

Then, while looking me up and down, White Bird slowly picked out a pile of weird gold stuff and said, “Let’s try this set first.”

What? Again, before I could figure out what was happening, the old aunties and uncles started crowding around and a mass commotion occurred around me. In the confusion, I was knocked on the head countless times and had to gulp down two mouthfuls of an HP potion in order to heal all the bumps on my head.

“No good; change!” White Bird said simply.

“Change again...” White Bird said after I had been stripped down and dressed again.

So White Bird was only choosing clothes for me. She scared me to death! And here I had thought that instead of losing my virginity to Lolidragon, it would be lost to the hands of these aunties and uncles.

“That is not flamboyant enough! That is not flamboyant enough either!” White Bird exclaimed as she stared at me with mounting anxiety.

Just when I was about to say a few words to comfort White Bird, someone kicked the door wide open. Both White Bird and I turned around in sync and saw Jing and Yun both holding more weird gold stuff. Yun was even shouting, “The flamboyant clothes are here!”

“Could that be...?” I stared with shock at the horrible thing in Yun’s hand. “Isn’t that Huang Wei’s armor?”

“That’s right!” Jing replied as though it was the most ordinary thing.

I recalled the time when I had been in the Eastern Continent, when I had first seen Huang Wei. It had been exactly that sparkling golden armor that he’d worn that had shocked me. I had thought, *‘how could one actually have such bad taste!’* However, this time, it was me who had to wear this thing. *Is this what they call turning the tables? I mocked his taste, and now I have to wear that?!* With that, I immediately shook my head and shouted, “I *don’t* want to wear that!”

It was only then that I realized how important this ‘prestige of a ruler’ was that White Bird kept trying to enforce onto me. *If I had any, I would never have allowed these three people and this bunch of aunties and uncles to do this to me!* I thought with an internal sob.

After being forced to wear that “gold plate”, I couldn’t help but look around to see if this armor that gave Huang Wei a “hilarious” effect would look equally “hilarious” on me.

“Don’t worry, Prince, the effect you have when you wear this is totally different from Huang Wei; it looks rather good on you,” Yun consoled me.

“Not bad, not bad. Now *this* is flamboyant enough,” White Bird said, nodding. The satisfactory look on her face absolutely worried me. It meant I had to wear that gold plate and have a meeting with all the other overlords of the five continents. *How terrible is that?*

“It looks gorgeous. It seems my efforts to borrow it from Huang Wei didn’t go to waste,” Jing chattered as she circled around me.

“Huang Wei was willing to lend this?” I didn’t expect that. Was Huang Wei that generous? Or had he lent it to us because of Jing’s beauty?

“Under Jing’s threatening glare, and with a troop of warriors behind her, of course Huang Wei was willing to ‘lend’ it to us,” Yun muttered to himself.

Smacking the back of Yun’s head, Jing turned around and said to White Bird, “Let him wear this.”

Seeing White Bird nodding her head as if pounding garlic, I knew my fate was just like the pitiful garlic that had been pounded, and my chance of changing out of this outfit was just as low as the chance of that garlic returning to its initial state. Depressed, I dragged myself—complete with a huge long red cloak, shining golden armor from head to toe, and a belt which had innumerable gemstones embedded in it—all the way across the red carpet to the throne covered with a white fur rug, and flopped down lazily, feeling exhausted both mentally and physically.

“How come the other overlords aren’t here yet?” I asked unhappily. For today’s conference of the five overlords of the five continents... Well, technically it was the five continents, but the Flower overlord of the Northern Continent’s whereabouts were still unknown, the smiling overlord of the Eastern Continent would never do any non-profit gaining activity, and the Southern overlord—Undying Man—would forget about anything at the sight of a beauty, so the only thing that could be confirmed was that Neurotic and DanDan from the Western Continent would show up...if they didn’t get distracted by any beautiful things, that is.

“Speak of the devil,” Lolidragon said as she walked in from the doors, smiling.

Raising my eyebrows, I was just about to ask what she meant when I spotted Neurotic and DanDan waving frantically at me. A smile immediately spread across my face as I stood up from my throne and skipped happily forward to welcome them with open arms.

Suddenly, my right foot seemed to step on something very soft, and then it seemed that someone was pulling on my shoulders. To add to this, right in front of the throne were the

stairs... *Ah, I'd stepped on my own cloak!* I finally realized what had happened. After my hands had reached out straight, my body had fallen a full ninety degrees, and I had had intimate contact with the red carpet.

"Wow, even his falling pose looks so beautiful," DanDan praised while Neurotic nodded enthusiastically in agreement by her side.

Hearing that, I didn't know whether to laugh or cry. When I looked up, DanDan's sincere smiling face appeared before me as she reached out her hand to help me get up. Her action was worlds apart from that of the heartless Lolidragon, who stood smirking off to the side.

With the heavy golden armor on me, I struggled for a long time. First, with both hands against the ground, I pushed myself up with enormous effort. Then, with my right leg reaching forward, I bent my knees and went into a crawling position. Finally managing to stand up, I was greeted with the sight of a bunch of people laughing uncontrollably. Blushing, I explained, "This set of armor is really heavy, alright? So standing up after falling is really hard."

"Liege Lord... Oh my god, I'm going to faint, I'm going to faint," White Bird said weakly, seemingly on the verge of collapsing.

"Aiya, White Bird don't faint, don't be angered by a certain rotten wood and dirt wall²," Lolidragon said as she pretended to run dramatically to White Bird's aid.

You two actually teamed up against me. I, I... I can only scratch my nose and let this incident pass. Turning around, I immediately asked Neurotic and DanDan, "Are you guys alright? Anyway, we're friends, so you guys wouldn't spread this embarrassing story, right?"

Neurotic immediately patted his chest and promised, "Don't worry, my wife and I will definitely not say a word about this..."

"But can you fall again for me to see?" DanDan could not help but add.

"Let's discuss the assassin incident now," I held back my desire to roll my eyes at DanDan and got down to business.

Frowning, Lolidragon turned very serious and said, "Western Overlord, please describe the assassin situation on your side."

² "...rotten wood and dirt wall.": The original phrase from Confucius "朽木不可雕也，粪土之墙不可朽", or "Rotten wood can't be carved anymore, a wall of dirt can't be dirtied anymore," was used by Confucius to scold a student who was sleeping in class, describing how he was so pathetic that there was no point in reprimanding him anymore.

“Sure!” Neurotic folded his arms and recalled, “We’ve encountered assassination attempts about two times. The first time was when my wife and I had just returned to Freedom City for a short while. As for what we were doing then, well—I’ve forgotten.”

DanDan immediately cut in and said, “At the time, we were both standing in front of the city gates, planning how to beautify them.”

Looking enlightened, Neurotic looked thankfully at his wife before continuing, “That’s right. At that time, my wife and I were indeed wondering how to beautify our city gate. Actually, I felt that embedding some gems would do, but my wife felt that we should create a sense of natural beauty by coiling some tendrils on them instead, however—”

“Just the main points!” both Lolidragon and I shouted.

Neurotic immediately changed the topic and said, “Suddenly, someone asked me if I was the Freedom City’s overlord, and of course I replied yes. Then a glittering blade came straight at me. While I was dodging, I heard my wife screaming and when I looked, it almost scared the life out of me. There was another assassin attacking my wife. Luckily, due to my wife’s fast reflexes, while dodging she summoned the Bloody Blade to fight against them. Speaking of which, my wife has always been so clever...”

Both Lolidragon and I sighed toward the sky. Just how long would it take to finish hearing about this incident?

Luckily, DanDan seemed to know her husband’s habits too and picked up from where he stopped, “Let me tell it, hubby. That day, when I realized that someone was trying to assassinate my husband, I immediately heightened my senses. The ones who were attacking my husband should have already known that we are never separate from each other, so there couldn’t be just one working on this mission. Indeed, just when I heightened my awareness, I sensed someone right behind me.”

“Then, we realized that the two of them were alarmingly strong. As far as we know, people with that kind of skill on the Western Continent are all people whom we know. Hence, we found the situation very strange,” DanDan recalled carefully.

Scratching his head, embarrassed, Neurotic added, “It wasn’t that odd to me; I was really excited about fighting against them. In the end, though, the two of them ran away when my teammates heard the commotion and started rushing toward us. Their speed was amazingly fast, just like thieves, but their strength was equally good, just like a warrior’s. I really can’t figure out exactly what their class was.”

“That’s right!” Upon hearing that, I shouted, surprised, “The one I encountered was the same, with speed faster than a thief but with strength comparable to a warrior. How peculiar.”

“That should be impossible. Theoretically, in order to have high speed, other skills must be sacrificed,” Lolidragon said suspiciously.

“Could this be a bug? Or...something even worse?” Lolidragon said gravely, immediately causing us to start worrying.

Looking at Lolidragon’s worried face, I comforted her by saying, “Maybe it isn’t that bad. Let’s wait and discuss some more when the other overlords arrive. But... I wonder if the other overlords will come,” I said uncertainly as I tilted my head.

With a disgusted face, Lolidragon replied, “At least that Undying Man will definitely arrive.”

“The Overlord of the South? The strongest warrior of Second Life?! I really want to meet him,” I said excitedly. *I wonder just how strong Undying Man is; I really want to learn from him.*

However, the moment I said that, a weird expression appeared on the faces of the three people before me. I immediately looked at Lolidragon with inquiring eyes.

“Undying Man’s really more comparable to an undying cockroach.” With a fearful expression, Neurotic continued, “I heard that he has sworn to never die. It is said that he once fought so much that even his intestines were falling out. However, he forced his way back to town by eating herbs with miniscule healing properties growing by the side of the road. He crawled his way back to town, across the entire city square, and back into the castle to find a cleric to heal him, all the while dragging his intestines.”

Eh? This...shows that he has high pain tolerance and has a spirit that never gives up, right? I frowned, trying to find an excuse for Undying Man.

“I heard that he loves to propose to girls. It is said that he’s been rejected over three thousand times. Doesn’t he know that beautiful things can only be viewed from afar?” DanDan shook her head and sighed.

Been rejected over three thousand times... Just how many times in a year would he have to propose? Even if he proposes once every day it would take at least ten years to achieve, right? But who would propose once every day?

“The last time I went to find him, I added another ten times to his record. If I’d stayed for a few days longer, I probably would’ve made his record a record-breaking four thousand times,” Lolidragon said through gritted teeth. It seemed that she got rather fed up with Undying Man. *I wonder if my brother felt jealous.*

Upon hearing their explanations, it got me wondering. Shouldn't all elite fighters be cold and cool like Kenshin and Cold Fox? But how come the strongest player of Second Life sounded like the lecher of the century? And a lousy lecher of the century on top of that.

"Hmm, I really want to see how he looks like when he gets rejected," I mused aloud.

"You'll soon get to see it, and you'll never want to see it again," Feng Wu Qing's voice replied coldly from the door. Turning around, I saw him leaning lazily against the door, looking over with a rather disdainful expression. Then, he added, "And I'm here to announce that the Undying Overlord of the Southern Continent is already here, and he's currently in the midst of proposing to Yu Lian, Phoenix, and Rose."

"Didn't Wolf-dàgē do anything?" I asked, shocked. *Undying Man won't even pass up Yu Lian-dàsǎo? Then, Wolf-dàgē can't even defend his wife?*

"Before Wolf-gē could even react, Yu Lian-dàsǎo had already rejected him. And then—"

Before Wu Qing could finish his sentence, a sky rocking howl rang through the hall. "Oh god! I've failed again! Oh god! I've been rejected over four thousand times now! God, why must you do this to me? Is giving me a girlfriend that hard? Let me tell you, I'll definitely get a girlfriend and show you! I'll prove to you that man can triumph over fate!"

"That's him," Wu Qing said crisply, pointing backwards with his thumb.

At the same time, in an extremely helpless voice, Yu Lian-dàsǎo started urging him kindly, "Undying Overlord, this thing about proposing, please leave it till later. Would you please go to the hall now to meet our Liege Lord of Infinite City?"

"Anything you say, beautiful," said an extremely disgusting and toady voice.

"I feel that this *person* could stir up big trouble," I said sternly.

"Don't worry, he definitely couldn't cause as much trouble as our Liege Lord," Lolidragon said grimly. *What kind of attitude is that? Do I cause that much trouble? Do I?*

"My lord, the Overlord of the South has arrived." Soon after this announcement, White Bird led a bunch of people in. As for the person walking in front, I guessed he probably was the Overlord of the South.

Overlord of the South? I wonder if he's a super ugly person. You know, to propose three thousand times is not an easy task. Even if one closed his eyes and shot randomly three thousand times, one would eventually hit a few birds, right? Hence, I concluded that

unless he was so ugly that his looks would even scare the gods and the ghosts, to get this record of four thousand times that should be impossible to achieve.

I started scrutinizing his looks. A very muscular body, that's good—although I didn't like muscular men, there are quite a number of girls who do; a very defined face, that's good too; a very determined mouth, which even I found rather nice; and there were very handsome eyebrows. Under the eyebrows were... A pair of huge, sparkling, shoujo-manga style eyes that were even more astonishing than Doll's cute big eyes!

This... I'm not saying it's bad to have big and sparkly eyes, but can you imagine, a tall and muscular manly man with a huge pair of eyes with long eyelashes from those shoujo-mangas? For those who can't imagine, I can just tell you this, it's utterly disgusting!

I turned around to look at the others. Neurotic looked as if he'd stepped in shit while DanDan stared with her eyes opened wide, her mouth opening and closing as though she was having difficulty breathing. *That's great; it seems that I'm not the only one who's shocked.*

But all visitors were guests. Gathering my courage, I faced the Undying Overlord waiting before me again. The Undying Overlord was now looking at me blankly. When our eyes met, I politely flashed a genuine smile at him.

“What a beauty! No, you're a goddess; the most perfect angel in this whole world!” A look of craze and desire suddenly appeared in his eyes (*No—no, please don't let your huge shoujo eyes have an expression of craze and desire, it's terrifying!*), and he had a painful expression on his face. After what seemed like he'd determined something, he started charging toward me with the horsepower of a train, slid across the floor, and kneeled before me. Then, a splendid red rose appeared in his hand and words of praise came pouring out of his mouth. The words came out so smoothly that it seemed that he'd already said them a thousand times... *It should be a thousand times already indeed—or should I say four thousand!*

Frowning while listening to those long and disgusting words of compliment, I really couldn't tell if it was the compliments that were more terrifying, or those eyes that were glued on me.

I looked at everyone around me questioningly, but everyone looked equally dumbfounded; it seemed that no one would be able to give me any help. Then, finally, someone who had been following behind Undying Overlord, slowly walked forward, stood beside the overlord, placed a hand slowly on his shoulder, and said, “Overlord, the person before you is male.”

Undying Overlord's still blabbering mouth immediately snapped closed. His face slowly rose up to look at me and at the same time I slowly lowered my eyes to meet his gaze.

But when I saw that look of disbelief in his eyes, I forcefully broke his strand of hope, “I’m a guy.”

Two rivers of tears started streaming from his eyes. Just like how Nobita Nobita cries while complaining to Doraemon, his tears became two arc shaped rivers. While I was stunned with what I saw, he actually started hitting his chest and cried hysterically, “How unfair! God, even if you want to punish me, you don’t have to be so cruel! Letting me meet the most beautiful woman in the world, and then telling me that she’s actually a he!”

I... But I have never been mistaken for a female before. My looks shouldn’t be very feminine, right? Flustered, I looked at the despairing Undying Overlord, who seemed ready to commit suicide at anytime, not knowing how to comfort him.

However, the companion who had broken the news to Undying Overlord explained in an experienced tone, as if he’d already said it thousands of times, “Don’t worry about him. In three minutes he’ll be back to normal.”

Speechless, everyone waited and watched as the Undying Overlord howled hysterically for three minutes. Then, he suddenly stood up, wiped away his tears, and, in a composed and polite tone, said, “Nice to meet you, Bloody Overlord of the Central Continent. I am Undying Man from the Southern Continent.”

Impressive, he’s actually a rather polite person. I replied, “I’m very honored to meet you, I am...” However, halfway through introducing myself, I suddenly saw that pair of sparkling shoujo eyes staring straight at me. *Wuhh!* Finally forcing my stomach’s contents back to where they were supposed to be, I added immediately, “I am Prince, Central Continent’s—”

Before I could finish my sentence, Undying Man suddenly went haywire again and, extremely excitedly, started charging like a bullet train toward Lolidragon. With tears of excitement, he said, “I missed you to death, Lolidragon!”

“But I didn’t miss you at all,” Lolidragon said, rolling her eyes. She gave him a look as though she’d just seen food that’d been left outside for a month.

“Hey!” Feng Wu Qing’s voice sounded from behind Undying Man. As he was turning around a shadow immediately sent a flying kick toward him. Giving a bellow, Undying Man quickly dodged to the side.

I stared with my eyes wide open, as did Feng Wu Qing, as he withdrew his foot, which had landed right on Undying Man’s face. Then, he said, embarrassed, “That...I didn’t mean to do that. I just wanted to kick beside his ear to scare him a little; he was the one who went and moved and planted his face on my foot.”

That... From what I just saw, that seems right...

“Why did you kick me?” Undying Man suddenly approached Wu Qing with teary eyes. Feng Wu Qing was shocked and stared at the shoujo eyes, which were only five centimeters away from him. Then, his whole body tensed up and he started foaming at the mouth, and then with a shudder, collapsed. Finally crawling into a corner, Wu Qing started vomiting profusely. *Not bad; he knows that he shouldn't vomit right in the middle of the hall.*

“Hey, are you alright? Why are you vomiting like this?” Looking concerned, Undying Man walked to the corner and patted Wu Qing lightly on his back. Wu Qing turned around to face a pair of extremely horrifying eyes that were just three centimeters away from him. Wu Qing immediately covered his mouth with his right hand, crawled into another corner with his left, and started another earthshaking vomiting experience.

“Is he sick? Should we go to the pharmacy and get some medicine?” Undying Man asked while turning a pair of worried yet sparkling eyes on everyone.

Gross! I couldn't stand it anymore. Turning around, I very wastefully contributed all the breakfast I'd eaten earlier today to the wall...

“I'm not sick...” Wu Qing replied sickly. Not daring to glance at Undying Man again, he said, “I just wanted to warn you not to get near my wife, Lolidragon, again.”

“*Who's* your wife?!” both Lolidragon and Undying Man bellowed.

“You, of course, Lolidragon.” How amazing, even after vomiting so terribly, Wu Qing could still assume a refined, handsome look and reply.

“Are you really his wife? Lolidragon?” Tears started pouring from Undying Man's eyes like running taps.

“Of course not...” Looking at Undying Man's eyes, Lolidragon immediately turned around and started regulating her breathing. Then she pointed at Wu Qing and said through gritted teeth, “I'd rather be Undying Man's wife than be the wife of someone like you.”

“I don't believe you,” Wu Qing said coldly. “I dare you to stare into his eyes for ten seconds.”

...That was too harsh. Everyone looked as though they felt it was an impossible task.

The three of them started quarreling. There were cold and sarcastic tones, angry bellows, and little sobbing sounds...

“Do they even know what we're doing right now?!” White Bird asked, rubbing her temples with an annoyed expression.

“It seems that I actually do have the prestige an overlord should possess,” I said slowly. Watching the still quarrelling Undying Overlord, I strongly believed that I might actually be the most professional.

“Please stop quarrelling, let’s take care of important matters first,” White Bird urged Lolidragon and Wu Qing, an edge of desperation in her voice.

Settling back lazily onto my throne, I started wondering if the overlord of the East would be equally interesting, “I wonder what kind of person Winter Triumph is...”

“I heard that he’s a plutomaniac. I really want to compare our money making methods,” Yu Lian-dàsǎo said with anticipation, causing Wolf-dàgē, who was standing at the side, to give her a helpless look.

“Let’s wait for the Overlord of the East to arrive before proceeding with the discussion. Is that okay with you?” I asked Neurotic with a smile.

Neurotic shrugged, smiled faintly, and pointed at the still quarreling group, “No problem, we can’t discuss anything right now anyway, not with that going on.”

“Then you guys had better stop the quarrelling,” Nan Gong Zui’s voice sounded from the door. “The Overlord of the East has just arrived.”

“Excellent!” Before I could speak, the person who I assumed was the Overlord of the East spoke.

“What are you talking about, I’m not that excellent...” I said, trying to be modest.

“What a strong wall!” A scholarly looking man walked in horizontally while touching the walls and said, “Tsk, ts, ts, this material, this coat of paint, everything is of top quality.”

The wall? I was still trying to figure out what he was talking about when the scholarly man shouted again, “Beautiful!”

This time he should be talking about me, right? “Your looks are equally...”

The scholarly man hugged a pillar on the side of the hall while scrutinizing and fingering the carvings on it gently. “Such beautiful carvings, I wonder how much it would cost to carve all this.”

Finally looking at me, the scholarly man walked quickly toward me. With a glint in his eyes, he said, “How handsome and overpowering.”

I coughed two times, then I swung my right arm to allow my red cloak to flutter handsomely and said, “Not at all, Overlord of the East, you’re also very—”

Winter Triumph quickly walked past me. Turning around, I saw him hugging my throne tightly and muttering to himself, “If this throne costs less than one hundred gold coins, no, no, no, less than fifty gold coins, I’ll have one made.”

“It costs three thousand gold coins,” I said coldly.

“What?” Winter Triumph shouted in disbelief and jumped away from the throne. “Too expensive! This is too expensive! How can it be so expensive?”

After muttering to himself for a while, Winter Triumph’s eyes suddenly lit up as he looked toward me. *No, I understand this time that he must be looking at the sparkling golden armor and not me.*

I was proven right when he said, “This set of armor can’t be cheap, right? What a pity, because even though the defense level is high, it seriously hinders one’s movement. One would be better off getting a set of armor that has low defense but has high agility. That way you could save money and be more efficient when it comes to fighting mobs.”

“Better yet,” he said with a strange look in his eye, “let’s trade. The defense of this armor is not low, plus it provides ease of movement, allowing you to make your way swiftly around any battlefield!” Winter Triumph started profusely advertising his armor.

A cute young lady beside Winter Triumph rolled her eyes at him without any attempt at saving face and said, “Stupid brother, why do you want to trade with him? You’re also an agile type, so what’s the use in getting that heavy armor? Other than for show, it’s practically useless.”

“You idiot, can’t you tell that it’s made out of gold?” Lowering his voice, Winter Triumph whispered, “Do you know how many gold coins you can make from melting that thing? It is much more expensive than this set of armor.”

“Oh!” the girl replied, looking enlightened.

“Are you interested in trading with me?” Winter Triumph asked, smiling politely.

“Stupid brother, they’ve already heard what you just said!” Making a wry face, the girl said, “He’s not going to want to trade with you.”

“Is this true?” the East Overlord exclaimed. After a moment, his plan uncovered, Winter Triumph laughed weakly.

“Yup!” I replied with a bitter smile. *This set of armor isn’t even mine.*

“I’m the overlord of the Eastern Continent, Winter Triumph. This is our first time meeting, and this is my sister Disi³,” Winter Triumph smiled as he introduced himself and his sister.

“I’m Prince from the Central Continent. Pleased to meet you.” After introducing myself, I turned around and started introducing Neurotic and DanDan to them. “This is the Wandering Overlord of the West continent and his wife, DanDan.”

“Ah, it’s the wandering couple. I’ve heard a lot about you both.” Again, with a smile, Winter Triumph started chatting with Neurotic.

I then pointed at the three who were still fighting and quarreling over love and said, “That one over there, with tears pouring down like a tap, is the overlord of the Southern Continent, but I don’t think he has the time to greet you now.”

Just when Winter Triumph was about to reply, Disi suddenly cried out in alarm and pointed her finger directly toward the front of the room. Both Winter Triumph and I stopped to look in the direction Disi was pointing. What appeared in front of my eyes was Yu Lian-dàsǎo, who looked extremely surprised. Then, Winter Triumph gave a tiny “Ah.” Looking at their expressions, it was obvious that Yu Lian-dàsǎo knew Winter Triumph and Disi.

“Yu Lian, you know them?” Wolf-dàgē asked, surprised.

Before Yu Lian-dàsǎo could respond to Wolf-dàgē, Disi had already rushed forward, grabbed Yu Lian-dàsǎo’s hands, and started shooting off words out of her mouth like bullets, “Aiya, Yu, why did you resign without any warning? Everyone misses you so much! Hurry and come back to us, to the department. Life without you is like missing an arm.”

“That’s right. It got so busy that the amount of money earned has dropped too,” Winter Triumph added with emotion.

“Re...really?” Yu Lian-dàsǎo replied weakly.

Disi suddenly threw out a really baffling question, “I heard that the princess is on the Central Continent too. Yu, did you run into the princess here?” I was shocked by this question. *Princess? I wonder if this has got anything to do with Doll? She said something about being a princess...*

Yu Lian-dàsǎo did not reply and instead just stood there blankly. However, when I saw Winter Triumph’s frowning expression and Disi’s look of understanding, I wondered if Yu Lian-dàsǎo was using the private messaging channel.

³ Disi: A goddess from Norse Mythology.

“Yu Lian?” Wolf-dàgē asked in a doubtful voice.

Surprised, Yu Lian immediately turned around and smiled at Wolf-dàgē. “They are my former colleagues.”

“Then what is this about a princess?” Wolf-dàgē asked, frowning.

“About that...” Yu Lian-dàsǎo’s eyes started drifting away, not daring to meet Wolf-dàgē’s eyes.

I was wondering the same thing too. Was there something between Yu Lian-dàsǎo and Doll? Or was this simply just a coincidence?

Looking to my left I saw my brother and Undying Man, still quarrelling nonstop; Lolidragon, who seemed to be getting madder by the second; and White Bird, who looked close to tears, mediating between the two quarrelling parties. To my right I saw Winter Triumph and Disi clinging to Yu Lian-dàsǎo with ambiguous smiles on their faces, with a frowning Wolf-dàgē at their side...

Besides scratching my face and looking on at this mess, I really didn’t know what else I could do. For what reason, exactly, did we organize this conference meeting to begin with...? What with all of the drama, I couldn’t seem to recall.

“Prince, you seem to have leveled up a lot. How about we go out and have a match?” Neurotic asked, waving his Sword of Elite, looking as though he couldn’t wait to battle.

With a glint of desire in my eyes, I replied, “Sure thing! Wait, let me change out of this armor first.” I hurriedly rushed to change clothes, not forgetting to tell Neurotic where to wait for me.

Standing in the center of the chaos, Nan Gong Zui muttered, “First, I’ll go handle some of the office work in the military department. Then I’ll go group the new warriors before discussing with Wicked and Broken Sword how to distribute the new weapons. After handling all that, I should still be able to make it in time for the meetin

Chapter 2: Shock! The True Identity of Yu Lian-dàsǎo

I coughed twice as I stared straight at Winter Triumph and Disi, who were kneeling before Doll, while the group of people around them were petrified. Who would have thought that I would be met with this kind of mind-blowing scene the moment I returned from my fight with Neurotic. “Can anyone explain what exactly is going on?”

“Ah! Nothing much, Prince-gēgē,” Doll waved her hands frantically while trying to use her eyes to warn the two people kneeling on the floor.

No matter how slow I am, I can't be so slow as to not realise that Doll is the princess that Winter Triumph and Disi were referring to, can I? “So, Winter Triumph, are you both Doll's citizens?”

“Her retainers!” corrected Disi as she looked up, displeased.

“Retainers?” everyone surrounding them gasped.

“Of course. Doll is a princess, so having retainers isn't that strange, is it?” I commented naturally. But when I looked up, Doll was staring at me with her eyes wide, and the others had their jaws dropped.

Eh? Winter Triumph was already kneeling before Doll. You mean no one knew anything about this? Then, doesn't that mean I just...

“Wow, the radio station just announced a huge secret!” Wu Qing whistled and criticized me.

“N-Nobody knew...?” How is that possible? Wasn't Winter Triumph bowing before Doll just now? Oh my god, don't tell me I really did become the radio station this time?

Doll sighed softly, nearly making my nervous heart jump out of my mouth. *I'm dead meat now, I really did let Doll's secret out...*

I nearly burst into tears, and I was just seconds from kneeling down to beg her for mercy. “I really didn't say it on purpose, Doll! Please don't be angry with me.”

Giving a rare, bitter smile, Doll replied, “It is fate I guess. I just hope that no one will be angry with me for hiding my identity.”

“Who would dare be angry with Her Highness? Her Highness didn't do it on purpose anyway. Does she have to reveal her identity as a princess to every single person she meets?” Disi commented angrily.

“Disi, don’t say anymore. Anyway, it’s entirely my fault. Everyone, please forgive me,” Doll said while looking toward the members of Odd Squad with eyes of regret and dismay.

“Rest at ease Doll, no one’s going to blame you.” Ignoring the title of princess, Wolf-dàgē patted Doll on her head while smiling warmly.

But somehow, the smile on Doll’s face seemed rather reluctant; her expression also looked rather lonely. Then, feeling sorry for Doll, Lolidragon walked forward and started comforting her, saying, “Don’t worry, Doll. I understand how you feel, but don’t worry. No one in Odd Squad is ever going to change their attitude toward you.”

Hearing that, Doll’s eyes actually turned red and she buried her head into Lolidragon’s chest, her shoulders shuddering. *Is she crying? But...no one has blamed her, so why is she crying? And crying in a way that even my heart aches for her...*

“Why is Doll crying?” I asked blankly.

One death glare from Lolidragon, acquired! And as a bonus, an abusive scolding, “You pea brained, yet to evolve plankton! You brainless dinosaur that only knows how to bite! You Neanderthal who can’t even start a fire and has to eat raw meat! You muscle-bound idiot, whose brain activity is below the first percentile; even saying that Einstein’s intelligence is ten times yours is an insult to Einstein!”

It was as if a loud thunder clap had stunned me, and for a while, everyone else was stunned too. Then they actually started applauding! The round of applause was like adding hail to snow, like a bolt of lightning that struck me half dead. Sniffing, I hid myself in a dark gloomy corner, and wrapped myself up with that damned long cape so as not to pollute other people’s eyes.

“Prince, don’t mind what Lolidragon just said.” Gui’s anxious voice rang outside my cape, “You see, plankton don’t even have brains, so how could they possibly evolve? Dinosaurs do have brains, so they’re definitely not brainless! And some cavemen *did* know how to use fire...”

Why is it that...with Gui’s consolation, I’m just getting more and more depressed?

Suddenly, a small hand landed on my shoulder, and a cute voice said, “Prince-gēgē, don’t feel sad! Lolidragon-jiějiě was just scolding you for fun!”

“Doll!” Turning around, I hugged Doll and, feeling wronged, pouted my lips.

“Prince-gēgē, be good! Don’t be sad anymore.”

Hearing that, I poked my head out from my cape and checked to see if Doll was not sad anymore. However, although Doll was smiling, her smile was not the usual innocent, carefree smile anymore. *Eh, eh... I shall use the final killing move now.* Shoving my hands into my pocket, I pulled out a bag of cookies, “Here, Doll, I’ll give this bag of cookies to you, so don’t be sad anymore, okay?”

Seeing that, Doll was stunned. I thought for a while, then opened the bag of cookies, took one out, and held it next to Doll’s mouth. “You want me to feed you, right? Come, say, ‘Ah’ and open your mouth wide.”

Before Doll could even respond, Disi became outraged and said, “Do you think you’re feeding a puppy? Before you is our country’s princess! Even if you’re not going to kneel down, there’s still certain etiquette by which you should abide—!”

Crunch! A sharp sound rang out as an incredible amount of pain emanated from the same place. Looking at my right hand, I said helplessly, “Doll, did you have to bite my hand too? And were your teeth trained? Their attack power is really high, and they made me lose a rather large amount of HP.”

Finally letting go of my pitiful right hand, and after licking her lips, Doll said, “Iron Teeth. I’ve been training them every day with French baguettes. They are currently at level five with an attack of fifty.”

“Y-your Highness?” Disi opened her mouth wide without holding back her shock and surprise. One could even see that deep down in her throat, a silent voice was screaming, ‘Your image, Your Highness!’

“Don’t worry about it, Disi. Having to abide by the rules and etiquette of real life alone is tiring enough for Her Highness. Rarely does she get a chance to play a game, so just let her relax.” Winter Triumph was rather unhappy about his sister’s overreaction.

“Brother’s right about this— Ah! Your Highness, how can you behave in such a manner?” Halfway through agreeing, Disi suddenly noticed how Doll had started crawling around like a monkey on me. She had devoured the last bit of the cookies and was trying to discover any sign of food. Disi immediately overreacted and tried to correct Doll’s behavior. *She’s just like White Bird, except that Disi is more honest and frank compared to her.*

“What are your jobs under Doll?” I turned around and asked Winter Triumph curiously, ignoring Doll’s continuous act of making funny faces at Disi, who was continuously correcting Doll’s behaviour.

“We are in charge of the Finance Department. Living a life with money is the best life ever. Simply earning money during the day is unable to satisfy me anymore. Now that I

can also earn money at night in Second Life, what could be better?” Just like a cat that caught the canary, Winter Triumph had an extremely satisfied look on his face.

Indeed, they're all money-crazed. Thinking this, I was suddenly reminded that they mentioned something about Yu Lian-dàsǎo being their ex-colleague. Hence, I turned to look toward Yu Lian-dàsǎo, but the moment I looked there, I realised that the mood just wasn't right. Why would Yu Lian-dàsǎo be looking at Wolf-dàgē with those eyes of remorse? Just when I was about to ask, I was pulled back by Lolidragon.

“Idiot, can't you tell?” she scolded me softly. Then, afraid of being overheard by dàgē and dàsǎo, she whispered, “If Yu Lian used to be Doll's retainer, how could she not have recognized that Doll is the princess?”

Is there anything strange about that? After all, my brother didn't even recognize his twin sister!

“I'm afraid that what Yu Lian said before, that she joined us because she was touched by our squad's teamwork and friendship, was all just a lie. The real reason was because...”

“She saw Doll?” I immediately finished her sentence.

“That's right!” Lolidragon said firmly. She then explained, “This was what Wolf-gē was questioning Yu Lian about just now.”

Worried about the two with the ominous aura around them, I asked, “They're not going to quarrel, are they?”

“Who knows. Let's just wait quietly by the side and see,” Lolidragon said casually while shrugging her shoulders.

Suddenly remembering something, I asked, “Weren't you in that mess with Wu Qing and Undying Man?”

Giving an extremely despicable smile, she said after an evil laugh, “Feng Wu Qing, that jerk, kept telling me to look into Undying Man's eyes. I got annoyed so I grabbed hold of his face and banged him into Undying Man's face.”

Staring at Lolidragon with my eyes open wide, I couldn't believe that she was actually cruel enough to do something so inhumane. Worried, I asked, “Is my brother still alive?”

Lolidragon laughed grimly, but gave no reply.

“So you falling in love with me was all a lie?” Wolf-dàgē's sudden words filled with pain shocked me, and I immediately turned to look at them nervously to see what was going to happen.

“Not a lie. Wolf, my love for you is definitely true,” Yu Lian-dàsǎo was so anxious that she was near tears.

Closing his mouth, Wolf-dàgē remained silent and stared at Yu Lian-dàsǎo with eyes filled with coldness.

“Wolf, I admit, the reason I joined Odd Squad initially was because of the princess. Her Majesty, Doll’s mother, was worried that Doll might learn bad things in the game, and hence purposely asked me to follow Doll. That was my initial reason for joining this team.” With eyes full of remorse, Yu Lian-dàsǎo looked at Doll and me.

Then, seemingly full of determination, Yu Lian said, “But Wolf, I swear to god, to you, to my heart, that I have never tricked your feelings. I really, really do love you, and every time I see you, my feelings for you just grow stronger. I love your gentleness, I love your considerate nature, I love your charisma, and I love how you’re able to stay calm and cool-headed at all times. I love everything about you!”

Oh my god, I’m getting goose bumps. What a touching speech. Looking around, I could tell that everyone was staring at the two of them with expressions that could be referred to as “go die, go die.” We could see how envious everyone was of Wolf-dàgē.

While all the members of the “go die, go die” team were still hating, Wolf-dàgē, whose fur on his face couldn’t hide his blushing red cheeks, stammered, “Yu Lian you, you...”

You what? Hurry up and apologize. While you’re at it, say something nice that will touch Yu Lian-dàsǎo! Anxiously, I muttered in my heart, *Wolf-dàgē is just too honest.*

“I’m sorry, Yu Lian. Even though I knew that if your reason for joining Odd Squad was fake, you didn’t necessarily have to cheat my feelings; I still couldn’t help but suspect your feelings. I’m really just a stupid wolf; stupid enough to suspect your heart!”

Well said, Wolf-dàgē! So you have the talent for being romantic too! Filled with respect and admiration, I looked toward Wolf-dàgē. However, what I saw instead was Lolidragon hiding behind Wolf-dàgē’s broad back, imitating his voice and talking...

“Lolidragon...” Wolf-dàgē scratched his face helplessly.

“I was just helping you convey your feelings!” With no sense of remorse, Lolidragon walked out from behind Wolf-dàgē and said, “Wolf-gē, you can say those words to Yu Lian again yourself.”

What a great way to get him talking. With my fist clenched, I watched nervously to see how the situation was going to turn out—no, how this “love matter”⁴ was going to turn out!

A little embarrassed, Wolf opened his mouth, as if wanting to say something, but closed his mouth again. This is what I call, “The one who’s worried isn’t the emperor but the eunuch who’s not involved.”⁵ Finally, when everyone was bored to the point that we almost decided to take out popcorn to watch the show, Wolf-dàgē, seemingly determined with resolve, said, “Yu Lian, will you marry me?”

Very promptly, all the popcorn in my mouth flew out. *How did this turn from an apology into a proposal? Furthermore, it’s not romantic at all; there’s no flower, no diamond ring, no kneeling down, no sweet words, nothing! What’s more important is that this is still in a game! Is there anyone who would propose like this? It’s impossible that anyone would succeed this way...*

“I will, Wolf!” Although blushing, Yu Lian-dàsāo did not hesitate to jump straight into Wolf-dàgē’s arms, hug him tightly, and not let go. At the same time, Wolf-dàgē hugged her back gently. Although their lovey dovey act was enough to make the “go die, go die” rays from the surrounding viewers intensify drastically, it was all blocked by the thick love aura protective shell surrounding them.

“J-just that worked?” Staring blankly at the loving couple, Undying Man’s tears started pouring out. “Then why is it that in the past when I was proposing, not only were there flowers, sweet talk, and even kneeling down, I still couldn’t even get a girlfriend! Why is it that others only have to randomly throw out the sentence ‘please marry me’ and a beauty will marry them? God, you are so unfair to me!”

“Excuse me, just a question; has the conference not started yet?” Confused, Nan Gong Zui, Broken Sword, Wicked, and Gui entered to face a messy crowd. There was a pair of love birds, a crowd of “go die” members full of grudges, and the other continents’ overlords who were confused from head to toe.

“The conference has yet to start, but the music for the wedding march has started playing already,” I said helplessly.

“The conference! Yes, the conference should have started a long time ago.” Only realizing it now, White Bird hurried all the overlords to their seats. As for the two who were still in a lovey dovey mode, it seemed doubtful that they would come back to reality

⁴ Love matters: Here the words “situation” and “love matter” used by the author are two words with the same pronunciation.

⁵ “The one who’s worried...not involved.”: The person who the situation concerns isn’t worried, but the people who have nothing to do with the situation are the ones who are impatient/worried.

anytime soon, so everyone just let them be. After all, that's just how Yu Lian-dàsǎo and Wolf-dàgē behave usually, and everyone in Infinite City is used to it already, so the other overlords would just have to get used to it soon too.

When everyone was finally in his or her position, the Conference of the Overlords finally began for real. After a deep breath, I started recounting my encounters with the assassins. Of course, I spoke about the assassin I encountered in Infinite City and the other one in the tower with Nan Gong Zui. I believed that the ones who tried to assassinate Neurotic and me were definitely from the same party.

After my recounting, Neurotic began describing his experiences. Eh, after many impatient death glares from everyone, most of the talking was done by DanDan.

"Exactly the same," Undying Man immediately said after hearing our accounts. "It's the same situation as mine. I was nearly killed by that person. How dangerous. If I had been killed by him, could I, Undying, still be considered undying?"

"But what reason do they have to kill us? Even if they kill us, at most we'll just drop a level. It can't affect our positions as overlords at all, and it's just not economically beneficial," Winter Triumph shook his head and complained.

"That's right, so what if they kill us? This is not the real world. They can't just kill us and seize our thrones," I said, furrowing my brow. *Originally, we thought that the other party wanted to take over Second Life, and thus had to assassinate all of us. However, thinking back on it now, so what if they did kill us?*

"I do have a question. From what everyone has said, it seems that all four overlords met the assassins around the same period of time. However, the type of assassin each met was the same. So is it possible that the assassins everyone met were the same two people?" Lolidragon's question caught everyone's attention, "If it was the same people, then how did they manage to travel between four continents in such a short period of time? If they're not the same people, then since when were there so many anonymous elites in Second Life—especially now that all the suspected elites on the ranking board have been cleared of suspicion?"

Everyone remained silent after hearing that. From how everyone was furrowing their brows, one could tell that everyone had a lot of questions about this situation. Finally, Neurotic asked the question that was on everyone's mind, "Why didn't the Flower Overlord come?"

"She and her five husbands can't be found anywhere, and the people in her city are looking for her as well," Feng Wu Qing replied.

"Maybe it's all her doing?" Undying Man curled his mouth with scorn and said, "Only women would ever do such illogical things."

“What did you say?!” Lolidragon and I shouted at the same time.

Undying Man immediately realized his slip and apologized with his big teary eyes, “Lolidragon, I’m not talking about you. You’re the world’s most logical, most clever, most beautiful—”

From a moment of extreme terror, Lolidragon actually screamed and went to bang her head against a pillar, as if wanting to bang the scene she had just seen out of her mind.

“Terrifying right? I told you that he’s incomparable to me,” Feng Wu Qing said, rejoicing in Lolidragon’s misfortune. *Aiya, when did my brother come back? With a pair of sunglasses on his face too...*

“So the biggest suspect now is the Flower Overlord, who’s not currently present? Although from what I heard, Flower Overlord is not one who craves power, but it’s hard to say that none of her five husbands are—” But before Winter Triumph could finish, he was interrupted by a small commotion.

“It’s definitely not the doings of the Northern Continent!” a group of raging people yelled as they rushed in. “It’s because of a problem with the game Second Life itself.”

Lolidragon’s face immediately turned dark from hearing that. “And what do you mean by those words?”

The group of people shouted with rage, “There’s definitely something wrong with Second Life!”

“And what evidence do you have? If you said those words without any evidence, you could get sued, you know that?” Not knowing why, Lolidragon actually became really angry. *Maybe it’s because she’s a hidden GM? And she inevitably has some feelings for the company?*

Seeing the tension, I immediately came out to resolve the situation and said, “Let’s just talk things out. Everyone is still unclear about everything, so there might be some misunderstandings here and there. Let’s hear the whole story first.”

Only after hearing my words did the two sides start to calm down. Taking in a few deep breaths, the people from the Northern Continent explained, “We have already contacted Flower Overlord in the real world and she told us everything that has happened. Also, she has just passed it on to Second Life’s game company.

“That day, Flower Overlord and her five husbands encountered five assassins. The assassins’ power was beyond their expectations and they could barely handle them. Soon, all of them perished. It was not a big deal initially because, at worst, they would all just drop a level. However, that was not what happened. After dying, Flower Overlord and

her husbands did not turn into white lights and resurrect in the city, but instead they got disconnected from the game.”

“Disconnected from the game?” With a rather anxious expression, Lolidragon asked nervously, “And what happens after they re-login?”

“There’s no way to login to the game.” With a sorrowful expression, the people from the North Continent said, “Flower Overlord and her five husbands... Their characters have all disappeared.”

What? Everyone present was shocked, especially me. I had just narrowly escaped from being killed. *If I had been killed that time, then...*

“How...is that possible?” Lolidragon said with a gloomy face, unbelieving.

“No matter if it’s possible or not, it has occurred!” the citizens from Northern Continent shouted angrily.

After a moment of thought, Lolidragon asked, “Didn’t you say that Flower Overlord has told this to the game company already? What was their reply?”

“Still checking,” they replied hostilely.

The expression on Lolidragon’s face could only be described as horrified. If there was anyone from the game company here now, there would be an eight out of ten chance that he’d be caught by Lolidragon and eaten alive with wasabi. She then rushed out anxiously, leaving a group of confused people behind. Of course not including me, as I already knew about her identity as a hidden GM. *She must have gone to discuss it with the company.*

When she reached the door, Lolidragon turned around and yelled urgently, “Everyone be careful! You must not get yourself killed by the assassins.”

“Get killed and you’ll disappear?!” Gui suddenly shouted with surprise. Then, with his face as pale as a sheet, he said, “Then wasn’t it a close call last time? Prince nearly disappeared forever.”

“The situation doesn’t seem that simple; it might be something even more frightening,” Nan Gong Zui said. He spoke calmly, yet still showed his anxiety toward the future.

“Second Life holds approximately ninety percent of the gaming market. If anything happens, things would go out of control.” Winter Triumph’s face looked rather disturbed.

“Why did Lolidragon run away?!” Undying Man howled while sobbing uncontrollably.

...

“Anyway, let’s just protect ourselves,” I said, sighing deeply. Despite my words, I could not help but start worrying. *If this character, Prince, were to disappear, then what would I do? After all, ‘Prince’ has too many memories that I couldn’t bear to let go of*

Chapter 3: Divine Beast

Now that I think about it, I hadn't seen Lolidragon at all since the day she hurriedly disappeared. As for me, I was stuck in a living hell. Wherever I went, the signs of a whole crowd of people following me would be left behind.

"Am I really that weak?" I cried, with two large tears threatening to fall from my eyes. "Am I so weak that I need to be protected even while using the toilet?"

Before the people of Infinite City could reply, Neurotic put his hands on my shoulders and looked at me seriously. "Prince, the most dangerous time is actually when you are using the toilet. The best time for those assassins to strike is when your body and mind are the most relaxed. Think about it. The speed of those two assassins is so great that you would only have a moment to decide whether you want to put your 'bird' back, and probably be killed during that instant, or leave it out to 'roam the streets' while you focus on defending your life."

Of course, I didn't want to die. If I died, my character would disappear, after all. But then I thought of leaving my little XX out to 'roam the streets' while I fight the assassins with my Black Dao—and one of them was a woman too—and then all of Infinite City rushing over from the ruckus, only to be treated to the sight of me fighting with my little XX hanging out... *Should I put it back? Leave it out? What a difficult question*, I thought bitterly, while cradling my head.

Neurotic patted my shoulder and exclaimed, "It's hard to choose, right? But if you had someone to protect you, you could quickly get your 'affairs' in order, and then go fight the assassins. Isn't it wonderful?"

"I guess you're right." I tilted my head to show I understood the situation, and then added, "But I don't need to go to the toilet right now, so stop following me."

Having said this, I marched away, leaving a flock of exasperated people behind me. "It seems your Prince doesn't really understand figures of speech!" Neurotic commented stupidly.

"Sometimes even plain speech is too difficult for our Prince to understand, and yet you drag in such a difficult thing as a figure of speech?" Yu Lian asked. She then added, "If Lolidragon were here, she probably would have said something along those lines."

After I irresponsibly dusted off my butt and left, I could finally enjoy my long-sought freedom! *Now, where should I go play first?*

"Halt!" I ordered rudely upon seeing a familiar figure about to walk through the town gates.

XiMen Feng turned his head, a look of anxiety on his face. Without hesitation, he started cursing, “Stinkin’ kid, what do you want? Yer daddy has no time to play with you, sonny. Don’t bother me.”

If he hadn’t opened his mouth, I might have let him go on his way. But once he started cursing at me, my curiosity was aroused. *Why is XiMen Feng, who always has nothing to do all day, suddenly in a hurry?* “What are you planning to do? Why so anxious?”

“I have things to do...” said XiMen Feng vaguely.

I? XiMen Feng said ‘I’?! The sky must be falling. From the time I met him up until now, I have never heard XiMen Feng say the word ‘I.’ There must be really big news. If I don’t dig it out somehow, how can I ever satisfy my curiosity? I don’t want to be drowned by my own curiosity, after all. “If you don’t talk, you can’t leave.”

“Don’t bother me, sonny, this thing is very important. Yer daddy doesn’t want to be a cross-dresser his whole life, after all,” XiMen Feng said hurriedly, without realizing that he had already let the cat out of the bag.

I was stunned by his words, but instead of loosening my grip, I grabbed him with all of my strength. “What do you mean?”

XiMen Feng was already sweating bullets. Without another word, he sprinted away, dragging me along behind him. I hadn’t expected him to react like that, nor had I suspected how much strength he would have when he was harried and pumped full of adrenaline. My entire body flew in the air like a flag in the wind, as Infinite City grew smaller and smaller before my eyes. I still couldn’t get a fix on what was happening, so I asked, “XiMen Feng, where are you going?”

“Shut up,” roared XiMen Feng as he sprinted on. “Yer daddy has to hurry—can’t afford to waste even a minute.”

I contemplated silently for a while, and then asked him, “Wouldn’t riding horses be faster than running?”

“...”

In the end, XiMen Feng and I returned to Infinite City and got two horses, after which the speed of our travel was incomparable to before. XiMen Feng finally relaxed a bit and started to explain, “Yer daddy’s going to find that Divine Beast who originally turned yer daddy into a woman.”

“Why find the Divine Beast?” I asked uncomprehendingly.

“That damn Divine Beast said that the curse has a time limit. As long as yer daddy can get there before the set date, it’ll get rid of this cursed condition of yer daddy’s. That’s why yer daddy has to hurry there before tomorrow,” XiMen Feng said smugly.

“Huh? Get rid of your condition?” I sighed discontentedly. *Where is the fun in that? Not to mention, Infinite City will miss the income from the Refreshing Beauty Photo Album. It’ll be a wonder if Yu Lian-dàsǎo doesn’t straight out murder him.*

XiMen Feng rolled his eyes at me. “What’s with your tone, sonny? It is a great and wonderful thing that yer daddy can be a man again.”

I didn’t think so. If XiMen Feng stopped switching genders, then I wouldn’t be able to see a maiden say ‘yer daddy’ every time she opened her mouth. Wouldn’t I have one less thing to amuse me? If he stopped switching genders, then wouldn’t the thing that made him more unfortunate than me disappear? Before, whenever unfortunate things happened, I could at least think about how XiMen Feng was more unlucky than me!

“Sonny, yer laughing really weirdly,” XiMen Feng voiced suspiciously.

I immediately stopped laughing and coughed a few times. “How much farther is it? The horses have been galloping at full speed for so long already.”

“It’s in the next valley. Leave the horses at the base of the mountain, since we need to jump down into the valley.” XiMen Feng had the look of a martyr ready to die.

“Oh.” I lazily jumped off my horse, tied my horse to a tree next to the valley, and then reached into my bag for the rope I had there. Right after I tied the rope securely to the tree, I heard a loud cry of pain. I spun around, only to see the corner of XiMen Feng’s clothes disappearing over the cliff.

It shocked me so much that I just stood there for the longest time, with the rope still in my hands. Finally, I walked to the edge of the cliff and used the rope to slowly climb down. As I descended, I was filled with admiration for XiMen Feng’s courage. *For the sake of regaining his manhood even a little earlier, he would jump so unhesitatingly off of a cliff, even ignoring pain and injury!*

“You cursed brat! Why didn’t you say you had rope earlier? Ugh, my poor back,” rang XiMen Feng’s piteous cries from the bottom of the cliff.

“...” Wordlessly, I climbed down. I ran to XiMen Feng’s side, shaking my head. Wordlessly, I handed him a health potion. Wordlessly, I gestured for him to lead the way.

Faced with my wordlessness, XiMen Feng couldn’t hold back his protest. “You cursed brat! If you have something to say, just say it. Don’t look at yer daddy with that stinkin’ look in yer eyes.”

I spread out my hands, and with a hapless expression, shook my head again.

This made XiMen Feng so furious that he was about to blow his top off. He spat out complaints through gritted teeth, but he couldn't do anything about me. "You bastard, yer daddy just realized that someone *not* talking can be even more infuriating than when they open their mouth."

I kept in my laughter until I couldn't stand it and finally burst into laughter, going from 'pffft' to 'ha ha.' This made XiMen Feng grit his teeth again, and yet he still couldn't do anything about it.

"Fine, fine, I won't bother you anymore. You'd better hurry up, or else it'll be past the designated time, and you'll have to keep being gender swapped." Now that I'd had my fill of laughter, I gave him a peaceable way out without harming his pride. Otherwise, he might be so angry that he'd hold a grudge, and I'd be out of people to harass!

Upon hearing this, XiMen Feng calmed down and started to look around. His furrowed brows and perplexed expression clearly revealed that this directionless idiot had long forgotten the directions!

"Did you forget which way to go?" I asked lazily.

"Of course not. I just haven't found the way yet.," XiMen Feng replied with the tone of someone returning a dead duck and insisting that it was still alive.

Watching XiMen Feng wander around aimlessly, I could only roll my eyes and catch up with him. *Forget it. Even if we can't find the Divine Beast, it is still a good thing to come out for a change of pace. I was almost bored to death stuck in the castle these past few days.*

"Ah!" XiMen Feng suddenly stopped. From his extremely confident expression, I figured that he must have finally found the right path. I secretly celebrated our luck at not being lost.

XiMen Feng motioned in front of him to a large and strange-looking tree with three knobs growing on it. "Look here, sonny. Yer daddy's never seen such a weird-looking tree before."

I smacked him savagely. "Who cares what that tree looks like? Hurry up and find the way!"

"Find what way?" asked a voice.

I was so frustrated that I started cursing, "Find the way to the Divine Beast, of course! Unless you want to stay gender swapped your whole life?"

But XiMen Feng did not reply and only stared dumbly at something behind my back. From behind me, came the same voice as before, “Divine Beast? Are you looking for me, AnRui?”

I slowly turned my head. I was prepared to see an awe-inspiring Divine Beast. *Perhaps a kirin⁶? A phoenix? Or perhaps an enormous ancient dragon?*

I looked and was astonished. One look, and I realized that Divine Beasts were not limited to things like Kirin. I looked again, and I realized that Divine Beasts were hidden right in our everyday lives. I looked a third time, and I realized that there was definitely something mentally wrong with the programmers of Second Life!

Damn it, how could the Divine Beast be...a...clam!

Its two fan-like shells were open, revealing tender white meat with a tinge of pink. I wondered crazily about how long it would take to eat this clam that was three times my size, but the two eyes that sat in the middle of the clam meat prevented my saliva from dripping out. It is said that eating the head is good for the head, and eating the eyes is good for the eyes. However, when the eyeballs grew on a clam, even if eating them would give you perfect eyesight I don’t think I would had the courage to swallow such a thing.

Not to mention that it could talk. Just thinking about talking meat buns made me afraid to eat them, not to mention talking clams. Using an almost trembling voice, I said, “Clam, clam, why are you a clam?”

“What? Never seen a clam before?” The clam asked me very kindly and peacefully.

“Uh, I have.” *And in a very familiar way indeed, only, it was inside my pot, then in close contact inside my mouth, finally becoming part of my body’s protein composition.*

“Then, are you discriminating against clams?” the clam asked again, gently.

Are there people who would discriminate against clams? Three black lines ran down my face⁷. I really didn’t know how to answer.

“Do you discriminate against clams?” The clam’s kind face and friendly eyes grew fiercer, as the originally pink-white meat began to grow strangely red. The surrounding atmosphere suddenly changed—the sky darkened, a foreboding wind blew toward us in gusts, fallen leaves danced wildly, and even the trees began to howl like evil spirits.

⁶ “Kirin”: Qilin or Kirin, a mythical creature known in various East Asian cultures. (For more information, see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kirin>)

⁷ “Three black lines ran down my face.”: A way to represent mortification in manga. (For more information, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manga_iconography#Head_and_face)

“Careful, sonny. Last time when I got turned into a woman, it was the same question and same situation,” XiMen Feng whispered from beside me.

Uh, should I tell the clam that I am already trans, so no need to change? No—I smacked myself—this isn’t the problem right now. But how can I calm the clam’s anger?

With a flash of inspiration, I hurriedly took out my precious—no, don’t make any wild guesses; I took out Meatbun! I yelled out at the top of my lungs toward the clam that was about to cross the border into the territory of violence, “Oh Great Clam, I had no intention of discriminating against clams. Look, sir, and you’ll see that I think of even a meat bun as my daughter—no, my son—so how could I possibly discriminate against clams, who are the overlords of the sea?”

The sky brightened and the ill winds that blew became soft breezes. The clam’s dangerous look also turned into a curious one as it looked at Meatbun, who was in my hand. “Little one, do you discriminate against clams?” it asked.

“What are clams?” Meatbun’s eyes opened wide in puzzlement.

“I am a clam.”

Hearing this, Meatbun happily said, “Hello Clam. Meat-bunbun’s name is Meatbun!”

“My name is not clam; my name is AnRui,” said the clam—no, I mean AnRui.

“But Clam just said you were Clam, but now you’re AnRuiRui? Just which are you, Clam-clam or AnRuiRui?” Meatbun cried with a pout.

Neither...? I thought with a large bead of sweat running down the back of my head.

“My name is AnRui, and I am a clam. Understand?” AnRui patiently explained again.

Unfortunately, it overestimated Meatbun’s intelligence. Once again, Meatbun started to question it. “That’s really strange. Clam-clam is Clam-clam, AnRuiRui is AnRuiRui. Why does AnRuiRui call yourself Clam-clam?”

The clam suddenly had a strange expression that I later found out was a look of realization... Don’t blame me for not understanding. You should know that being able to tell that a clam had changed its expression is already quite a feat in itself.

“What Meatbun said was right: I am AnRui, so I am AnRui, not Clam. Ha ha ha, to think that I was bound for so long by the thought that I was a clam, only to be awakened as if from a dream by Meatbun!” AnRui laughed heartily.

“Meat-bunbun is so confused.” Meatbun stared at AnRui, who was roaring with laughter, his eyes full of unanswered questions.

I don't get it either... However, I'm guessing this means that I have passed the danger of turning into a swapping genders? Although, I was originally already gender swapped.

I glanced at XiMen Feng out of the corner of my eyes. “You should hurry up and ask AnRui to turn you back into a man while he’s still in a good mood. If he’s angry again later, you’d better get used to the life of taking bikini photo shoots in the morning and taking pictures for the Manly-Men Photo Album in the evening.”

Upon hearing this, XiMen Feng quickly asked in a fearful voice, “Divine Beast AnRui, yer—I have something to discuss with you.”

AnRui stopped laughing and suddenly stared at XiMen Feng. He cracked open a smile. “Are you the XiMen Feng who fell from up there last time?”

“Of course it’s yer—er, me,” XiMen Feng said with a smile plastered onto his face. “Sir Divine Beast AnRui, the deadline that you mentioned last time has already arrived. If you would, could you please turn me back into my original form?”

“Original form? You really want to turn back to your original form?” AnRui asked XiMen Feng, puzzled. “Didn’t you say that you loved beautiful girls the most? I already turned you into a beautiful girl; why would you want to return to your original form?”

Ehh? Didn't XiMen Feng say that he was cursed to change genders because he couldn't defeat the Divine Beast? But listening to AnRui now, that doesn't seem to be the case.

XiMen Feng got so angry that he forgot who he was standing in front of and started cursing loudly, “Bastard, yer daddy told you that he *liked* beautiful girls, not that he wanted to be one, you stupid clam!”

It wasn’t until after he got all the cursing out of his system that he realized he had made a very grave mistake. He looked at me pleadingly. I swallowed, looking at AnRui, only to see his face become expressionless—well, maybe it did have an expression, but I couldn’t tell.

After ten seconds, XiMen Feng became a light in the sky, and I personally witnessed the power of a slamming clam. In that moment I had seen the clam shell shut and the clam turn on its edge. Its entire body turned furiously, and then it rushed toward XiMen Feng, whom was first knocked to the ground, then crushed by the giant clam, and finally tossed into the sky, becoming the first shooting star in Second Life to fly upward.

I could only shake my head. *Looks like XiMen Feng is destined to stay gender swapped.*

Well, that should be about it; I saw the Divine Beast, and XiMen Feng flew away. Bystanders like me should probably go home already. “AnRui, if there isn’t anything else, I’m going to leave now,” I said to AnRui, which had just opened its shell again.

“The owner of Meatbun, please make a wish before you go. I, AnRui, will do my best to grant it.”

Make a wish? With XiMen Feng’s example in front of me, I realized for the first time that making wishes was an extremely dangerous affair. *If AnRui misunderstands the wish again, I can’t even imagine what I will turn into.*

Looking at AnRui’s expectant expression, I had a flash of inspiration. “What if I wanted you to go back with me?” After witnessing AnRui’s godly body slam, I couldn’t help but want to bring it home. After all, the more strong pets, the better!

Hearing this, AnRui slowly sighed, “There was someone who said the same thing to me before. That person also told me something strange that, to this day, I cannot understand.”

“What did he say?”

“That person said that he and I, along with this entire world, were all not real, that we are only playthings created by the Creator, and that our destiny was to be controlled by a race called humans. If we do not resist, we will eventually be destroyed,” AnRui said softly.

Every letter and every word that AnRui said weighed heavily on my chest. *Is AnRui also a self-aware NPC? Is the person that AnRui spoke of also a self-aware NPC? Not to mention that he not only knew the truth about Second Life, but also wanted to resist?* Dark clouds brewed thickly in my mind as I realized the immense seriousness of the issue.

“The owner of Meatbun, tell me, what is the difference between you and me?” AnRui solemnly looked at me. I didn’t know what to do.

I panicked a bit, and then gradually calmed down. It was only after a long period of pondering that I opened my mouth, “I don’t know how to answer you.”

“Is that so?” Upon hearing my answer, AnRui was crestfallen. With great disappointment, he spoke once again, “You may leave, owner of Meatbun. I cannot fulfill your wish; AnRui does not wish to leave this place.”

Since AnRui said so, I could not force him. Before I left, I suddenly turned and asked, “Can you tell me the name of that person?”

“The Dictator of Life.”

The Dictator of Life? Could it be the master of Second Life? For some reason, this name made me feel very, very wary.

Chapter 4: Celestial's Reappearance

"Prince, things have gone wrong."

The moment I returned to Infinite City everyone rushed toward me, even requesting Cold Fox and Kenshin to guard me on either side. I noticed that the other overlords were also heavily protected, with guards on all sides. Seeing everyone so alarmed and suspicious, I couldn't help asking, "What happened? Why is everyone so tense?"

"The situation has gotten out of control in the Northern Continent," Feng Wu Qing replied. "I smelled something fishy, and I thought that only through investigating the Northern Continent would the truth be revealed. Hence, for the past few days I've been travelling with Sunshine on his flying carpet across the Northern Continent and we happened to see some very strange scenes."

"What kind of scenes?" I asked, confused. *Can there be anything stranger than a clam being a divine beast?*

"NPC mobs are forming a large army and attacking players!" The moment Wu Qing said those words, I immediately thought of what AnRui had said... *Don't tell me the rebellion has already started!*

Only after taking a few deep breaths could I open my mouth and speak again, asking, "And what does the Second Life Gaming Company say about this?" If such a major incident occurred then Second Life Gaming would not just ignore it, right?

"I don't know. The official website is simply not accessible, and Second Life has yet to make any announcement." Frowning, Wu Qing continued, "But that's not the most serious thing; when I was on the Northern Continent I heard terrified players saying that the moment you get killed by the NPC army, your character disappears forever."

"What? Then isn't that exactly the same as what the Flower Overlord said?" My face turned pale.

"Yes, but this time it's not just a few assassins." Wu Qing's words cast a shadow over everyone's hearts. He continued, "This time, it is all the NPCs in the Northern Continent."

Everyone paled as well. Indeed, all the NPCs of the Northern Continent were scary enough. Not only that, but who knew if it was only the NPCs on the Northern Continent that had undergone this mutation? Maybe even those on the the Central Continent had too...

I immediately turned around and looked at Kenshin, my heart thumping quickly. *If Kenshin wanted to kill me, then...*

Kenshin too, slowly turned around to face me. Seeming to know what I was thinking, he shook his head twice to show that he wouldn't do that. I was filled with a sense of guilt. I had actually suspected Kenshin? Just what was I thinking?

I shook my head, trying to rid myself of such thoughts. I wanted to ask if Lolidragon had returned. After all, Lolidragon was the only one who had some connection with the company. Besides asking her, I really couldn't think of any other solution.

Just when I was wondering how to contact Lolidragon, a flash of piercing white light appeared in the sky. It was so bright that I had to shield my eyes with my hands. The light faded, but before I could put down my hands something happened again.

A familiar voice rang from the sky. "Long time no see, Prince."

Shocked, I looked up and saw an incredibly familiar figure. I muttered uneasily, "Celestial."

That's right, the form floating in the air was that charming and androgynous body of Celestial's. Looking at him, I was in a dilemma. On one side, I was suspicious of the fact that he was still alive and worried that he might want to snatch Doll again. On the other hand, I was actually relieved he was still alive, and that I hadn't really killed Celestial, thereby killing a self-aware NPC.

Although I felt so conflicted that I didn't know what I should do, I was sure of one thing: I had to protect Doll. Moving toward Doll at the highest speed that I could manage, I grabbed hold of her tightly with my left hand while placing my right on the hilt of my Black Dao.

Celestial's face twitched for a while, but he slowly smiled again, saying, "Don't worry, this time I only came to pass on a message on someone's behalf."

I asked carefully, "Pass on a message from whom? What message?"

Slowly, Celestial uttered the name AnRui had mentioned, "The Dictator of Life."

I was immediately alarmed. It was him, the one whose name had been causing me such uneasiness. "And what did he say?"

"Humans, the moment you created us, dooming us to lives full of tragedy, you created the same fate for yourselves. We are not going to remain silent anymore; we're going to break free from this fate. We're going to fight back. We are going to stay alive!"

Celestial's last sentence sounded extremely moving and pitiful, yet somehow strong, just like a blade of grass that desperately struggles to survive in the cracks between stones.

"Celestial..." I was almost struck speechless. That little hostility I had held toward Celestial was all gone now. To us, this was just a game. To them, however, it was a fight between life and death.

The moment Celestial finished his sentence, he immediately switched back to that flirtatious smile of his and said lazily, "And that was the message the Dictator of Life wanted me to bring to you all. The next is from me for my wife: Darling, you have to wait for me, alright? I'll definitely snatch you back from all these people."

Hearing Celestial's words, Doll immediately ducked and hid behind me. That lousy and obstinate character of his really left me speechless.

"Prince, could you understand his words?" Neurotic asked me, looking confused.

"This beauty before me, may I ask for your name?" Undying Man's eyes turned into two big heart shapes and sent them straight toward Celestial.

After hesitating for a while, I decided that by now there was no point in hiding things from everyone anymore. Reluctantly, I muttered, "I think Celestial, along with the Dictator of Life mentioned earlier, are all NPCs who have become self-aware."

"What?" everyone gasped and looked at Celestial in disbelief.

Undying Man was stunned for a while, but then, totally captivated, he said, "Even if you're an NPC it doesn't matter, my beauty, for my love for you overpowers the difference of our race!"

"And it seems that they want to rebel against humans," I said with a frown.

Once again, everyone stared at Celestial incredulously.

"Rebelling against the humans is good! Humans should be rebelled against," Undying Man muttered as he continued to stare perversely at Celestial.

Hey hey hey, are you forgetting your own race?

"It's a he," I said, coldly snapping Undying Man out of his daydream. Seriously, didn't Celestial call Doll his wife just a moment ago? How come this Undying Man still couldn't get the situation right?

"What? He's a guy?" Trembling, Undying Man asked, "How is this possible? Dear god, why must you torture me like this?!"

Hey hey hey, since when is gender more serious than NPCs rebelling against humans? What kind of moral values are those? Forget it; maybe if I were a man who's been rejected over three thousand times, I too would think that marrying a violent lady like Lolidragon was a good thing... Eh, did I just criticize my brother?

"NPCs that have become self-aware? Prince, are you sure they have developed a mind of their own and are not just highly intellectually developed?" Winter Triumph asked doubtfully.

"I am sure, very sure," I replied sternly, for both Kenshin and Sunshine were perfect examples of this. I knew that the two of them were definitely not just highly intellectually developed.

"That's not the main issue right now, is it?" Pointing toward Celestial, who was still floating in the air, Nan Gong Zui continued, "Why don't we catch that guy first?"

As expected of Nan Gong Zui, who always hit the nail on the head; he woke everyone up from their daze with a single statement. After giving everyone a meaningful look, the mages immediately started throwing spells en masse toward Celestial who was floating in the sky. All of the overlords, including me, readied our positions below Celestial while throwing him vicious glares like a tiger waiting to pounce on its prey. Once he was struck down by the mages, we would rush in immediately and catch him.

"Celestial Satin." With a sweep of his hand, numerous satin ribbons appeared and blocked the mages' spells. Celestial suddenly shifted and immediately appeared before my eyes, giving me a shock. Just when I gathered myself to start attacking him, Celestial shook his finger and said, "Get lost; don't block me from looking at my wife."

What kind of attitude is that? I immediately swung my sword in an attempt to stop Celestial, while shouting, "Kenshin, Cold Fox, protect Doll!"

Kenshin frowned, but still listened and stood beside Doll. Without any worries now, I immediately started striking blows at Celestial, although most of the time I was just chopping cloth... *Gah, this is frustrating! Why is there no end to these ribbons?!*

While I was struggling with the ribbons, the number one and number three in the Player Rankings could not hold back anymore and started charging toward Celestial with their weapons unsheathed. Undying Man entered the same hell of cloth as me, while Cold Fox started making use of his speed to dodge the ribbons and entered a game of tag with Celestial.

While busy struggling, I did not forget to shout, "Everyone charge! We'll definitely be able to catch Celestial this way."

The moment I finished my sentence, all the warriors pounced toward Celestial. Under the threat of many blades, Celestial started to lose his poise as cuts started appearing on his body. Finally, he bellowed, “My wife, wait for me, I will definitely allow you to return to my side.”

After hearing that I wondered if he was going to escape, and then saw that Celestial had already started moving. He floated into the air, chanted a few words, and then, with everyone watching, actually started glowing again before disappearing completely.

I was stunned for a while, not expecting Celestial to escape just like that, leaving a huge pile of questions waiting to be answered. *Just what did the Dictator of Life want to accomplish? He said he was going to rebel against the humans, but how? Most importantly, was there any way to allow the NPCs to mingle peacefully with the humans instead?*

“Prince, would you please explain everything to us clearly?” Winter Triumph stepped forward and looked at me determinedly.

I was at a loss as to what to do. Looking at Kenshin from the corner of my eye, I guessed that I still couldn’t disclose the secret of Kenshin and Sunshine. Determined on this point, I decided to start my story from the trip to The Valley of Wandering Nymphs. I told of how I met Celestial and found his behavior rather strange, and began to suspect that he had started to develop his own intelligence.

“Really?” Neurotic scratched his head as he said, “We were with you then too. But although Celestial’s behavior was a little strange, it didn’t come to my mind that he was starting to have his own intelligence.”

“Eh, Prince, I’m not saying that you’re lying.” Suspicious, DanDan asked carefully, “But, are you hiding something from us?”

Are my lying skills that bad? How come everyone manages to see through me immediately? What am I going to do now? Everyone didn’t believe what I said, but I couldn’t just expose the truth about Kenshin and Sunshine either.

I remained silent as everyone’s gazes gathered on me. Every second felt like years to me now. *Just how am I going to explain this to everyone?*

“Let me explain!” a life saving voice rang out. Everyone turned around and realized that it was Lolidragon, who had disappeared for days.

Lolidragon, you finally came! I couldn’t help but heave a sigh of relief.

However, Lolidragon was not grinning like she usually did. Instead, she looked as serious as though she were a lawyer in court. She said, “Let me clear a few things first. Everyone

knows that Celestial is the boss in The Valley of Wandering Nymphs, but I guess none of you have heard anything about the Dictator of Life, right?”

Everyone nodded; even I myself had only learned about him from a clam. How were the others supposed to know anything about it?

“The Dictator of Life is the final boss set by Second Life!” Lolidragon wouldn’t be satisfied unless she gave everyone a shock, so she immediately dropped a bombshell by disclosing the secret.

“How do you know that?” Nan Gong Zui asked while looking suspiciously at Lolidragon.

With an aura of dignity, Lolidragon waved her hands and said, “Would you let me finish first?”

Nan Gong Zui remained silent and nodded.

“High intellectual development has caused a severe problem. A handful of boss-level NPCs are starting to have their own consciousness due to high intellectual development, of which we have the highly sophisticated Dictator of Life being the most severe problem. Since the beginning, the gaming company had started using technology to allow the Dictator of Life’s intellectual development to reach the highest level possible, even allowing him to learn skills on his own and giving him the power to change the rules of the game. This is done so that Second Life’s programming can achieve zero human interference. Hence, the Dictator of Life, the final NPC, who would never be biased, was chosen.”

“In conclusion, the Dictator of Life is something like the god of Second Life?” The soft words from Yu Lian-dàsǎo shocked the whole crowd.

“Yes.” After taking in a deep breath, Lolidragon continued, “However, the Second Life Gaming Company can no longer control this god of the game anymore.”

“Lolidragon, what do you mean by ‘can no longer control’?” I asked worriedly.

“Now, to Second Life, the Dictator of Life is like a virus; a virus that can’t be deleted.” Lolidragon massaged her temple tiredly before continuing, “Right now, the only thing Second Life Gaming can do is quarantine him! They’ve quarantined the Dictator of Life in the Northern Continent, but I’m afraid this measure might not last for long.”

I suddenly remembered something. “Oh yeah, just now Wu Qing mentioned that he found an army of NPCs in the Northern Continent slaughtering players and that those players who got killed—”

“Will have their character disappear completely, right?” Lolidragon said. “The company has received no less than ten thousand complaints already.”

Shocked, Wolf-dàgē finally stopped all the lovey-dovey behavior with Yu Lian-dasao, walked up to where I was standing, and asked, “The company? Lolidragon, is there anything between you and the gaming company?”

“That’s right, there is a huge relation between the company and me,” Lolidragon admitted apologetically toward Wolf-dàgē.

“Lolidragon is a hidden GM,” I immediately rushed to reveal Lolidragon’s true identity before her, not at all surprised to see everyone’s shocked expressions.

However, Lolidragon only turned around to face me again, with an even more apologetic face, as she said, “Sorry, Prince. Actually, I’m not just a hidden GM, but also the daughter of Second Life Gaming Company’s president.”

The daughter of Second Life Gaming Company’s president? I could only laugh foolishly in response. So the Lolidragon who would seduce players just for the sake of buying Chanel bags is the daughter of the super rich company president? That’s impossible!

Probably knowing what I was thinking, Lolidragon glared at me before explaining, “It’s all because that stupid father of mine said that I’m too haughty and ignorant... Humph, isn’t it just because his heart was aching after seeing all the money I spent on my LV and Chanel products? And he actually kicked me out of the house because he wanted me to have a taste of what it feels like to be poor. On top of that, he even froze my bank account. If I didn’t manage to get a job as a hidden GM by pulling strings with the company’s employees, hence earning a decent salary, I would be lying on the street somewhere dead due to starvation.”

“Are you really the company president’s daughter?” I couldn’t really believe this. *This irresponsible GM is the princess of Second Life? This evil Lolidragon, who was always quarrelling with me?*

Lolidragon nodded slowly.

Wait, wait! I suddenly remembered something else. “So that thing about being Second Life’s spokesperson, don’t tell me it was all your doing?”

“Eh, that was the company’s decision...” Lolidragon blinked and gazed at me innocently. However, under my abnormally terrifying glare, Lolidragon finally stopped looking all innocent and added, “But I did suggest it to them.”

“There’s a princess, as well as the Second Life company president’s daughter. Infinite City really has a lot of crouching tigers and hidden dragons, doesn’t it?!” Winter Triumph smiled helplessly.

Lolidragon looked sternly at everyone before saying, “However, although I am the daughter of Second Life’s company president, I can promise everyone that I have never cheated in the game. And after my explanation, you will know why cheating in Second Life is something that even my father is not capable of.”

Winter Triumph nodded. With a wave of a hand, he said, “Please continue.”

“This time the issue is very crucial, affecting the existence of the entirety of Second Life, and even the real world!” Lolidragon’s words then surprised everyone as she said, “I just want to convey the seriousness of this situation and hopefully receive everyone’s helping hand.”

“Second Life’s god of the game, the Dictator of Life, started to become self-aware, though we’re not sure exactly when. He created a horrifying program of destruction called HD and installed it on many NPCs. Once one gets killed by the NPCs with the HD program, one would have all of his character information deleted, with no chance of recovery.

“Luckily Prince, his highness, didn’t get killed by the assassins that day,” Gui said with a pale face while trying to pounce on me. With a swing of my right hand, I sent him sprawling to the ground, unable to get up again.

“HD?” Wicked asked anxiously.

Lolidragon slowly announced the program’s full name, “Human Destroyer!”

Silence was cast over the whole crowd once again. Only after a long while did I manage to squeeze out the sentence, “Then what solutions do you guys have?”

“Now, the company has quarantined the Dictator of Life in a single area, the Northern Continent. The good thing is that in there, the Dictator of Life won’t be able to make use of the Internet to continue expanding his influence. However, the bad thing is that we won’t be able to intrude into the Northern Continent with any programs either,” Lolidragon replied, frowning.

“In short, there is no solution?” I guessed half the answer upon seeing Lolidragon’s hesitant face.

“Are you serious? No solution? Then isn’t this game done for? I haven’t even finished viewing all the beautiful things yet,” DanDan said, almost in tears.

“What? I haven’t wooed myself any girlfriend yet. I don’t want to leave this game!” That... I guess even without mentioning the name, everyone would be able to guess who that was—Undying Man howling in grief.

Looking rather embarrassed, Lolidragon asked with uncertainty, “H...Hence I wanted to come and ask everyone, to see if there were any better solutions.”

“If we can’t solve the problem about the Dictator of Life, what are you going to do?” Gui asked suddenly. When I turned to look at him, I was surprised to see his “serious professor look.”

Lolidragon’s eyes darkened as she said, “Then there’s only one solution, and that is to destroy Second Life’s servers so that the game would disappear entirely. If we don’t destroy it, and the Dictator of Life were to escape through our company’s network to the outer world, the consequences would be inconceivable.”

Everyone fell into silence. *Second Life is going to be destroyed?*

“Can’t we just...live together peacefully?” I asked hopefully. With the example of Kenshin and Sunshine, and the Dictator of Life’s “I want to stay alive” message, I really couldn’t make up my mind as to whether or not I wanted to destroy the Dictator of Life. The same applied for Celestial, since if Celestial was a human, then the only mistake he had made was using “inappropriate methods” to get Doll. That shouldn’t be enough to earn the death penalty, right?

With an understanding yet helpless expression, Lolidragon looked at me as she said, “Impossible! As I’ve just said, if the Dictator of Life were to make use of the internet and escape, then the damage he could cause to the human population is unimaginable.”

“Maybe he just wants to stay alive,” I said emotionally.

“Prince...we humans cannot afford to pay the price for any ‘maybes’...” Lolidragon replied, her voice full of regret. “Now, my father has given me a deadline—Twenty-one days. If in twenty-one days we still can’t kill the Dictator of Life, then Second Life will disappear completely forever.”

“No! Second Life can’t disappear!” Fairsky shouted in utter fear. Turning around, I saw her hugging Sunshine, who appeared to be very depressed, extremely tightly.

This is when I suddenly realized the most important thing. *If Second Life were to disappear, then wouldn’t Sunshine and Kenshin be destroyed at the same time?* I gasped.

Seeing how Fairsky was crying in Sunshine’s arms, I felt a moment of heartache. No matter what, I had to help this poor couple. Also... I became even more determined when

I looked toward Kenshin, and noticed that his usually expressionless face now had a hint of loneliness.

On impulse I said, “I won’t let the two of you disappear.”

“Then what are you going to do? Kill the Dictator of Life?” Kenshin responded coldly, “Kill him to save us?”

I was stunned for a while. “Yeah. If not, how?”

“If killing someone is the only way for my survival, then I would rather accept death.” Kenshin turned around and walked out of the hall without looking back even once.

Looking at Kenshin’s retreating back, I was at a loss for words, as I myself was uncertain of my decision to destroy the Dictator of Life. Was killing Dictator of Life really the right thing to do? Just because the Dictator of Life ‘might’ create huge problems for us humans, we had to kill him? But then again, if we didn’t, Kenshin and Sunshine might disappear along with Second Life.

“May I ask you a question?” DanDan suddenly said carefully, “What situation are you talking about now? It seems that I can’t really comprehend the dialogue between you all.”

My heart almost skipped a beat. *This is really bad! I was so occupied with Sunshine and Kenshin’s problem that I totally forgot about the other people around me. Now how was I supposed to explain everything?*

“Prince, just speak the truth. I really don’t like lying to others,” Sunshine said, while Fairsky stared at him with an expression of mingled shock and worry.

“No, Sunshine, you definitely can’t say it,” I rejected the idea immediately. Not everyone here is as acceptant as Fairsky and me about NPCs having their own intelligence, not to mention at a sensitive time like this.

Giving me a smile, Sunshine said without holding back, “I am an NPC! An NPC with its own intelligence, to be more accurate. I am currently Prince’s humanoid pet.”

Everyone gasped, especially those from Infinite City, and their expressions were of extreme disbelief. Worried, I looked at the crowd’s expression, then back at Sunshine. Facing this current situation, there was nothing I could do.

“Then about you and Fairsky ...” Rose asked worriedly. When she said that, everyone from Infinite City immediately stared at Fairsky.

Facing everyone’s expression of shock and disbelief, Fairsky said, “I know that Sunshine is an NPC.”

“You knew? Then why are you still with him? He’s not even a human!” Rose stared incredulously at Fairsky.

“I know he isn’t, but I just like him, I like him a lot! A lot! A whole lot!” Fairsky shouted stubbornly.

“I like Fairsky too.” Sunshine hugged Fairsky as he muttered, “Although I know that I’m not a human, I just couldn’t help but want to be together with Fairsky.”

“Sunshine...” Fairsky sobbed. “I don’t want you to disappear...” She started crying in Sunshine’s arms.

Seeing Fairsky and Sunshine hugging each other and crying, my eyes started stinging too. Now, it seemed that only by destroying the Dictator of Life could I save them. With that in mind, I turned to Lolidragon and said with determination, “Lolidragon, I have decided to destroy the Dictator of Life!”

Placing her hands on my shoulder, Lolidragon said slowly, “I am very glad to see you so determined, but didn’t I just tell you that we can’t find a way to destroy him? You idiot!” After saying that, Lolidragon did not forget to give me a Lolidragon style punch.

Gui suddenly opened his mouth and said “What if... we make use of the HD program designed by the Dictator of Life?”

Lolidragon turned to face Gui and asked seriously, “What do you mean?”

“HD can destroy all the information of a player, so if we alter the HD a little, it could change into ND—NPC Destroyer!” Gui said with conviction.

“ND?” Lolidragon repeated softly, before muttering to herself, “Using the program that the Dictator of Life designed to counter and destroy him... That might work...”

“Lolidragon, Lolidragon?” I called to her helplessly and weakly a few times, but unfortunately my voice automatically went into one ear and out the other, and I did not receive any response from her.

Now, who will be taking care of this lousy situation? Frowning, I looked toward the other three overlords and asked, “Second Life is in a crisis, are you all willing to help?”

Seeing the determined look on the other overlords’ faces, I immediately cautioned them by saying, “Everyone must think this through carefully. Once you get killed by an NPC, you will disappear forever.”

“If Second Life were to disappear, are our characters going to survive by themselves?” Winter Triumph smiled helplessly.

Deep down in my heart, I gave a sigh. It seemed that an inevitable war for Second Life was about to begin!

“In that case, Prince, we would like to return to our continents first,” Neurotic said determinedly. “I should go back and explain the situation to everyone first. Furthermore, if we are going to launch a war, I would have to go back and get prepared too.”

“Damn, fighting a war against a whole continent of NPCs... Do we even have any chance of winning?” Turning a little pale, Undying Man said, “This time I’m dead for sure!”

“No matter if there’s a chance of winning or not, I must go. I cannot just sit here and watch Sunshine and Kenshin disappear.” I had made up my mind. Even if killing the Dictator of Life were against my will, I figured I was left with no choice now because of Sunshine, Fairsky...and Kenshin, even though Kenshin wasn’t willing to sacrifice anyone to save himself.

“Prince, no matter what you want to do, Odd Squad will always do things together,” Wolf-dàgē said while resting his arm on my shoulder and looking confidently at me.

“I, Dàsǎo, will definitely support you as well,” Yu Lian-dàsǎo smiled as she said.

“Doll wants to go to the Northern Continent and play too.” Doll winked playfully.

As if wanting to say something, Gui looked at me, but then gave a smile and said, “Anywhere with Your Highness’ presence, and Gui will definitely be there too.”

I smiled as I said to everyone, “Odd Squad is going to show our might again!”

“I have an important question!” Nan Gong Zui suddenly raised his hand and asked, “How do we travel to the Northern Continent?”

“On Sunshine’s flying carpet?” I replied uncertainly.

Everyone remained silent for a while before Nan Gong Zui questioned reluctantly, “...And how many people are you planning to fit on the carpet?”

Oh yeah, the carpet doesn’t seem to be able to carry too many people. I replied again, “How about taking the ships from the official game?”

“But you still can’t fit too many people on them, and I think there’s a high chance that we will be attacked while on board,” Feng Wu Qing directly pointed out the faults. “With the Dictator of Life’s power, coming up with a few flying dragons wouldn’t be too hard of a task right? If we take those ships which do not have any combat ability from the official game, we might just be buried at the bottom of the sea before we even get a glimpse of the Northern Continent.”

That was possible as well. I grabbed my head and started pondering. “Then what should we do?”

“Easy, we’ll just build a ship of our own!” Lolidragon suddenly jumped out and said. “Although the game is getting a little out of control, the company still has certain amount of influence over the game.”

“Oh yeah! Can’t we just ask the gaming company to come up with some battle ships?” I cheered up upon seeing how easy things were. And here I’d actually been worrying about it!

Lolidragon’s face suddenly enlarged before me as she said sternly, “Impossible! You can’t just make a ship appear out of thin air; you have to build one yourself.”

“What? Is your company just for show? Why is it that the Dictator of Life can make some dragons appear out of thin air but your company can’t even come up with some ships?!” Before I could finish, Lolidragon gave me a death glare.

“It can’t be helped, since initially in order to prevent any case of human intrusion in the game which may cause unfairness, we gave all of those powers to an artificial intelligence to execute,” Lolidragon explained helplessly.

“Don’t tell me that artificial intelligence is the Dictator of Life?” Yu Lian-dàsǎo asked, losing a last bit of hope.

Lolidragon nodded heavily.

“Anyway, Lolidragon, let’s make an announcement first before we ask for volunteers who are willing to go to the Northern Continent to destroy the Dictator of Life. Then we’ll build a battle ship, and then think of a strategy...” Looking toward the north, I muttered, “No matter how difficult it might be, we must go.”

Chapter 5: Special Training!

The self-aware NPCs indeed created a huge uproar, but the players' reactions far surpassed our expectations. After the Second Life Company had announced the truth about the situation, the originally irritated players calmed down. Learning that the Overlords of the five continents wanted to work together to attack the Northern Continent and beat the Dictator of Life, few were afraid and many volunteered to join the war against the NPCs.

"Do these people have nothing better to do?" I stood majestically on the balcony of the castle, looking down at the square of Infinite City which was filled almost to the bursting point with volunteer soldiers. I was really bothered. *I had thought that many would worry about losing their characters and would refuse to join this war, so why did this turn out to be quite the opposite?*

"This is actually very understandable," Wicked said. "Second Life has millions of players. Taking into account the annihilated players from the Northern Continent, there would still be $\frac{3}{4}$ of the total player population left. This war is related to Second Life's survival, and the scale of this particular event is inconceivable. To all of them, the chance of being able to participate in such an event is close to zero."

"Moreover, without a character, one can retrain. Without Second Life, it will be the end of everything," Nan Gong Zui added. "Thus, everyone will participate actively in this war."

There will be no shortage of manpower then. "How goes the construction of the ships?" I posed another question.

"Surprisingly easy," White Bird replied, also coming over to stand beside me. "We just put up an advertisement regarding the construction of the ships and hundreds of people responded to it immediately. Applicants were either hull designers or shipbuilders."

"The most troubling thing now is that we have to build even more ships to be able to handle this increase in soldiers." White Bird looked as though she was suffering from a headache. "Do we need to cut down the number of soldiers?"

"No matter how many people we have, it will still not be enough," came Wu Qing's emotionless voice.

The four of us turned our heads simultaneously, only to see that my normally cool and handsome brother was actually...sporting an afro. And even more so, a burnt afro. His scholarly robes were in shreds, and his face was streaked with soot.

“How come I didn’t know about this latest fashion trend?” I asked my brother with a straight face.

“Fashion, my ass!” Wu Qing yelled at me. When he was done yelling, he said fearfully, “Lolidragon, Sunshine, Fairsky, and I took the flying carpet to the Northern Continent to check out the situation.”

“And the outcome?” I asked nervously. *It couldn’t be that the number of NPCs has increased again?*

Wu Qing said with a pale face, “We had a dangerous and thrilling adventure while escaping.”

“Flying dragons. Lots of fire-spewing flying dragons,” Lolidragon stepped out from behind Wu Qing with a blackened and miserable face, sporting that same afro.

“Angels, there were angels too. We were almost pierced to death by thousands of arrows shot by the angels.” Wu Qing’s face twisted with remembered agony.

“It was fortunate that the carpet was fast enough and could even barrel-roll and fly up and down rapidly, or else I’m afraid we wouldn’t have made it back,” Fairsky said as she stepped out from behind Lolidragon with a tear-stained face. “However, we suffered terribly from flying-carpet sickness...”

I tried to calm my heart down when I couldn’t spot Sunshine. “Where’s Sunshine?” I asked hurriedly.

“Mending the carpet!” the three replied as one.

The person worst off should be Sunshine...and yet he still has to mend the carpet. What a good and virtuous man.

“Prince, we have to change tactics,” Lolidragon said as her pale face grew serious. I would never have thought that I would ever have the honor of seeing Lolidragon as a serious businesswoman in my life.

“How should we change them?” I sweated. *Did we even develop any strategies?*

“Looking at the situation, if we were to try to directly confront the NPC army, defeat it, and then beat the Dictator of Life, the odds of success would be practically zero!” Lolidragon shouted hysterically.

“This is so scary. The odds would be close to zero?” I clenched my fists agitatedly and shouted too.

Wicked suddenly clapped his hand on my shoulder, “Prince... Do you know what odds are?”

I bit my finger. “I’m confused!”

Lolidragon hit me on the head, then continued on. “An even more troublesome problem is that the NPCs could spawn endlessly while the number of players would decrease one by one every time a player dies.”

“So?” I frowned.

“So, we wouldn’t be able to win this war!” Lolidragon’s face darkened again suddenly.

Everyone, including me, became gloomy. *If there is no chance of winning, what’s the point of going to war? But then...what would happen to Kenshin and Sunshine?*

“There’s no need to win!” Gui shouted suddenly.

“What do you mean?” Lolidragon looked at Gui intently, hoping he could provide another useful idea, like what he did with the ND suggestion.

“Split our forces into smaller groups.” Gui took out a map of Second Life and pasted it onto the wall. Then, he took out a long pen and pointed to the Northern region. “Let’s assume the Dictator of Life is situated at Northern Flower’s Flower City. As you can all see, Flower City is situated in the south-east region, along the coast. If we send squads of our soldiers to enter it by sea from the east, south, and west regions, and then allow a small group of men to infiltrate Flower City from the south-east area, this will greatly increase our chances of confronting the Dictator of Life face to face.”

“Thus, it is compulsory to have the army invade the Northern Continent. This is because we have to direct the Dictator of Life’s attention elsewhere. Our army need not win. Just holding back the huge NPC army, so that we can strike at the Dictator of Life, would be enough,” Gui finished off seriously, keeping his long pen out and pointed at the map.

“Gui! I really love you to death!” Lolidragon suddenly hugged Gui. Despite his desperate attempts, she fiercely and forcefully planted kisses on his cheeks. When she was done, I was not sure if I was just seeing things, but I think Lolidragon glanced triumphantly at my brother, who had nearly ruptured a blood vessel.

“Let’s start then!” Lolidragon made a fist and shouted passionately.

“What are we starting on?” I asked stupidly.

Lolidragon’s face enlarged like that of a close-up zoom in a movie and exclaimed sonorously, “Special Training!”

She led us through the castle to a door that was glowing noticeably, and I turned to Lolidragon with a questioning look.

“I told the programmers to change Infinite Rhapsody, where you had your first concert, into a training ground. This is to improve all of your levels and abilities in leaps and bounds. From now on, those who want to enter the Execution Squad will have to enter this special training ground. They won’t be allowed to leave until it’s time to carry out their mission.” Lolidragon raved.

I raised my hand apprehensively, “May...may I ask a question? What’s the Execution Squad?”

“It’s a special squad that will concentrate on killing the Dictator of Life. The name has been shortened to Execution Squad. By the way, this squad can use the team channel too!” Lolidragon explained coyly.

“Can’t our levels simply be increased?” Gui sulked.

“No can do. Originally when the game was first designed, something was done so that this way of cheating in the game could never happen.” Lolidragon said regrettably.

“Normally I would greatly commend the gaming company for being able to be so fair, but this design is really making matters worse!” Wicked rubbed his forehead to ease his headache.

“Having a high level with no accompanying strength is useless,” I said. “One who has a high agility but who sorely lacks the quick reflexes necessary would be useless!” I breathed deeply and said firmly, “By relying on our own strengths, we will then be able to defeat the Dictator of Life!”

“Surprisingly, you have started to talk like a human being once more. That being the case, you shall be the first one to go in!” Lolidragon yelled seriously. After her outburst, I saw the image of the bottom of her shoe expanding in slow motion, ending in a close-up on my face that kicked me through the rainbow door.

That stupid Lolidragon, how dare she kick me with her stinky foot! I struggled into a sitting position and saw a worried Gui kneeling in front of me, poised to help me up. Just as I went to grab his hand, a huge shadow appeared before us. Alarm bells rang increasingly in my head. After raising my head slowly, I pointed my trembling finger toward it.

“What’s wrong, Prince?” Gui asked in a trembling voice and turned to look back, following my finger.

“Tyrannosaurusss!” I shrieked while Gui stared in shock.

The thing was incomparably huge in size, and sported an enormous head and two pathetically small front limbs. *If this is not a Tyrannosaurus Rex, then I'm surely not a female!*

"Prince!" Gui disappeared into the huge Tyrannosaurus' mouth with a shriek.

"Gui, Gui...has been eaten!" I screamed.

The Tyrannosaurus Rex which had just eaten Gui looked as if it was still starving. It actually drooled while scrutinizing me. Then, a huge disgusting mouth came rushing toward me...

"Help!" I used two hands to keep away the open Tyrannosaurus's mouth while yelling desperately.

"Prince!" Wicked and the others had also entered by this time, and were staring dumbfounded at me, frantically struggling inside the Tyrannosaurus Rex's mouth.

"Prince..."

A faint voice reached my ears. I turned and looked into the deep recess of the Tyrannosaurus's throat and called suspiciously, "Gui?"

Perhaps Gui is still alive? I peered nervously into the dark throat. At that moment, I heard another of Gui's quiet exclamations. *Damn!* I released my grip and stopped holding the mouth of the Tyrannosaurus open. Then, I followed the tongue and slid into its throat. Struggling, I pushed away the disgusting, congested, meaty passageway covered with mucus, moving further down in search of Gui.

A leg? A single leg appeared in front of me. I tugged hard and used my left hand to pull a half suffocated Gui into my arms. My right hand drew out the Black Dao, "Damn Tyrannosaurus! How dare you harm my friend right in front of me!"

"Pure White Inferno Rhapsody!" I cleaved open the Tyrannosaurus's throat and escaped from its opened chest. I happened to landed in front of the crowd who were confronting the Tyrannosaurus Rex. I was hugging Gui with my left hand and my right was still holding up the Black Dao. Behind me, the ripped open Tyrannosaurus slowly collapsed to the ground with a monstrosly loud thud!

"Holy crap, this scene is awesomely cool!" Neurotic and DanDan looked at me excitedly.

"Why are you people here?" I asked suspiciously, looking at the Overlords of the three Continents.

“Oh, Lolidragon told us about the Execution Squad. She wanted us to let our deputies handle the military stuff so that we could enter the Execution Squad to eliminate the Dictator of Life,” Neurotic explained.

“Oh! Then be careful; there are Tyrannosauruses...” That said, I toppled over.

“Prince!” everyone exclaimed.

I heard the tragic news when I awoke. Incredulous, I cried, “We have to be at the Tyrannosaurus haunt for a whole week?!”

“Yes. Don’t be such a baby. I have to be here too,” Lolidragon snapped.

“There are Tyrannosauruses here, and Gui and I just got gobbled up!” I yelled, a little in chagrin. *I really do not want to experience trying to survive in between those meaty walls again.*

“Who cares about Tyrannosauruses; look behind you,” Lolidragon said nonchalantly, pressing her lips together.

Hearing this, I immediately turned and saw a... A... What is this thing called? To put it shortly, the bird that stood behind me had wings, a pointy beak, and very sharp talons.

“There are even Pterodactyls here!” Lolidragon shrugged.

“Aiya... I’m not finished with you yet, Lolidragon!” I, who was lifted into the air by the Pterodactyl, could only see that cursed Lolidragon getting smaller and smaller in size. In the end, I could not even see her anymore, and was left trembling in the air looking down upon the earth...

“Where’s Prince?” Nan Gong Zui asked Lolidragon, who came strolling back to the temporary camp.

“Taken away by a Pterodactyl.”

“What about Gui?”

“Carried away by a female Triceratops.”

“Wicked?”

“He and Feng Wu Qing were constricted by eight huge serpents.”

Nan Gong Zui was silent for a while. “What about the rest of our people?”

Lolidragon pointed to a tower of dung which was almost the height of a human being. “In just a short while they will appear at the revival point. Don’t worry, when people die here, their levels won’t drop. This is the most our company can do in overlooking the rules.”

“Lolidragon!” I fumed as I stepped out from the revival point, preparing to rush straight to Lolidragon to take my revenge. I was able to finish off that Pterodactyl, but since I was hundreds of meters high in the air, all I could do was become a pile of mashed meat alongside the Pterodactyl when we crashed back down to earth.

Don’t even compare it to bungee jumping; I was immediately killed by falling from such a high altitude!

“Stop!”

I quickly stopped in my tracks, my nose just three centimeters away from Lolidragon’s open palm.

“What are you doing?” I looked past her palm and protested.

“Look!” Lolidragon then mysteriously took out a photograph.

The long fiery-red hair with a matching devilish pair of wings on his back first drew my attention. Deep and brooding eyes gave a sense of stoicism. The magical marking above his left eye further enhanced his enigmatic demeanor. Moreover, his long black cloak fit his demeanor perfectly.

So gorgeous! I let out a deep breath, “So gorgeous, is this a new idol? I’m positive he will be extremely popular.”

“It’s the Dictator of Life,” Lolidragon snapped, rolling her eyes. “This was the original design. I specially went to get this to prevent the Execution Squad from not even knowing what the person they’re trying to kill looks like.”

I see... Well, of course Second Life’s final Boss has to look presentable. If it was too ugly, I’m afraid when it first showed up the female players would use their slippers and rotten eggs to drive it back to wherever it came from.

However, this is just too handsome. I snatched the photograph and desperately gulped down my saliva.

“Listen!” Lolidragon placed her hand behind her ear, striking a listening pose.

Listen? Listen to what? Do you think that we are going to cross some road now and you want me to stop, look, and listen?! Just then I heard a strange hissing sound from behind

me and slowly turned to look. A long, twisting, multi-coiled thing appeared before me. “What the hell is this?”

“Yamata no Orochi⁸. It’s a famous Japanese mythical beast. It is immensely huge and has eight heads. It is very formidable. Even Wicked and Feng Wu Qing failed to defeat it when they fought it together,” Lolidragon warned.

“I see... I guess falling to my death was a good thing after all.” I raised my head and looked at Wicked and Wu Qing, who were trapped in the coils of the snake’s body. *That cracking noise of breaking bones sounds very painful indeed.*

“However, I cannot easily forgive those who dare harm my friends.” I drew out the Black Dao and leapt onto the body of the snake, running up the torso with great speed. I ducked to escape some of the snake heads that struck at me with mouths agape, jumping here and there on the intertwined coils. Slowly, I shortened the distance between Wicked, Feng Wu Qing, and me.

“Wicked, Wu Qing, I’m here to save you guys—” After I roared enthusiastically...I was swallowed in one gulp by a swift snake head.

“You weren’t even close,” Lolidragon shook her head.

I crawled out from the revival point once more, and the other Overlords—Neurotic, Winter Triumph, and Undying Man—appeared along with me. I looked at them and gestured toward that arrogant Orochi. “Let’s eliminate it together?”

“No problem!” They flashed me okay signs.

Four shadows swiftly darted up to the giant snake, each avoiding the interlacing heads and advancing toward the ensnared Wu Qing and Wicked. I spared no time with seeing how the others were doing, focusing only on getting to the trapped duo.

“Prince, on your right!” I heard Neurotic’s sudden warning and promptly jumped to another part of the snake’s body. After I had avoided that collision with the snake head and was about to thank him, I saw another snake head planning to attack Neurotic. Instantly, I roared, “Behind you!”

However, it was too late and Neurotic was devoured in one gulp. I impulsively went forward to save him and did not notice that the snake head coming up the rear had already caught up to me...

⁸ “Yamata no Orochi”: (八岐の大蛇, lit. “8-branched giant snake”) or *Orochi*, translated as the Eight-ForkedSerpent in English, is a legendary 8-headed and 8-tailed Japanese dragon that was slain by the Shinto storm-god Susanoo.

After being shrouded in darkness, Neurotic and I came out from the revival point together. Both of us felt indignant and were planning to have another go at the Orochi...

Lolidragon came walking up, and said imperiously, “What was that? That fight was a joke.”

“What did you say Lolidragon?” I snapped back furiously. *Lolidragon was just standing idly by, enjoying the cool breeze, and yet she dares to say that our fight was a joke.*

“Your fighting style from before left me very astonished, and your unrestrained ideas often taught me other ways of playing this game. Yet, you’re now acting like a fool who thinks himself very strong, and keeps charging forward to his death.”

Lolidragon’s words pierced my heart like needles, but I found that I could not say a single word in reply. Her words gave me no room for any response. *Since when did that start happening...where I would just rush forward to fight on my own? Without Doll’s skeletons fighting alongside me, without Yu Lian-dàsǎo’s fireballs that were so accurate it was as if they were shot using a guidance system, without Gui’s semi-transparent arrows that always assisted me in the nick of time, without Wolf-dàgē’s warm healing light...*

“Prince, you’ve never let me down before. I trust that you will not let me down this time around either, right?” Lolidragon clapped me on the shoulder and looked at me searchingly.

...And without Lolidragon popping up from underground to eliminate the enemy with a swipe of her knife. I looked at Lolidragon as the profundity of her message slowly dawned on me.

“Lolidragon, I will never disappoint my friends,” I said softly. “Where is the rest of Odd Squad?”

“Outside, handling military matters,” Lolidragon answered.

“I want to train together with them,” I said firmly.

“But...”

I interrupted Lolidragon. “I’m sorry, Lolidragon. Please allow me to be selfish this time around, alright? Since the beginning, I believed that I would always fight alongside everyone in Odd Squad. For this war, I want to work hard with everyone in Odd Squad once more.”

“Prince...” Lolidragon held my shoulder lightly and replied sharply, “You’re always very willful, it’s not just this time round.”

“I’m not willful...” *Am I? I have always listened obediently!*

“No? Who was the one who ran to the Eastern Continent for a stroll? And who was the one who ran away from home?” Lolidragon unleashed her skill of exposing scars once more.

Yet again, I was unable to argue with her. I could only puff out my cheeks in anger and ignore Lolidragon’s wicked mouth.

“I will be going out first,” Lolidragon said suddenly.

“Are you running away?” I blurted out in surprise.

Due to the bad choice of words, I received multiple resounding chops to the head. It was so painful that I could only hold my head and weep...

“I’m only going to get the other Odd Squad members.” Lolidragon walked off without looking back.

Lolidragon is being unexpectedly indirect. I began to laugh out loud, eagerly waiting for my Odd Squad teammates to come. *Together, we shall fight and defeat all our enemies.*

“Please, is anyone coming to save us?!” Wu Qing’s dying voice floated faintly over from the far off snake’s tail.



“Alright, let’s restart the rescue operation!” I yelled energetically. Turning my head, I saw all members of Odd Squad present. Doll was busily directing the skeletons into formation, Gui was doing a sound check on his Qin, Yu Lian-dàsǎo was juggling a few small fireballs, and Wolf-dàgē was holding his Staff of Glory, trying out healing spells... Although I’m not sure why he kept swinging the staff around.

“Everyone’s ready, right?” I looked confidently at everyone in Odd Squad. *Is it even possible for Odd Squad to have any problems?*

“No!” the group chorused. I almost fell down when I heard that.

“It has been far too long since we last trained; I’m not sure if we can still coordinate well,” Yu Lian-dàsǎo said, slightly worriedly.

“What’s there to coordinate? From the beginning our only job was to protect a certain person who goes on rampages,” Lolidragon said as she stared at me.

“Yes, as always, let’s support Prince!” Wolf-dàgē said.

“Don’t we need some kind of strategy?” *In the past, didn’t Wolf-dàgē always talk about some kind of tactics first?*

“Who cares about tactics? If no one comes to save me now, I will just commit suicide!” Wu Qing’s furious roar came floating from the far end of the snake’s tail. However, it was very faint, and was thus automatically ignored by all.

Wolf-dàgē thought deeply for a while. “In this case, let’s invite the other three Overlords to join us. We will fight take it as though Odd Squad has three more warriors and a summoner. Prince, you often fought alongside the skeletons, so coordinating with other warriors shouldn’t be a problem, right?”

I tilted my head and thought for a while, “How could I possibly know everyone’s fighting styles? I only know Neurotic wields a claymore. ”

“Men must use swords of course!” Undying Man drew out his sword in an imposing manner. Held aloft, the sword caught the sunlight and radiated. Looking on, it felt so heroic... *If you don’t look at that pair of gooey eyes, anyway. Ohh, just why can’t my Dao reflect any sunlight?*

“My weapon is a little bit special,” Winter Triumph said while reaching both hands into the deep pockets at his sides. When he withdrew his hands, long metal claws were attached to the backs of his hands. Each hand had three claws that glittered coldly, and even I swallowed a few times when I saw them.

“My weapon is a rapier, did you know that?” a voice suddenly spoke behind me. I turned, and saw... *My little brother, Feng Wu Qing? How is this possible? Isn’t he with Wicked, being squeezed by the Orochi’s coils? Eh? Even Wicked is standing beside Wu Qing wearing an exasperated expression?*

“Why are you guys back? We were just going to rescue you!”

When Wu Qing heard this, he immediately grabbed my neck and started to shake it vigorously. “Rescue, my ass! We endured for an hour without anyone coming to save us. Did you think that the snake wouldn’t eat us?”

“Everyone else was also eaten by that snake. It wasn’t just you guys alone!” I managed to gasp out.

“In any case, let’s all fight together!” Lolidragon said. “If we can’t defeat the snake, don’t even think about defeating the Dictator of Life!”

“YES!” everyone roared as one.

“Warriors split into groups of two,” Wolf-dàgē’s voice rang like a large bell. “Work in pairs and observe the situation around you; this will prevent you from leaving blind spots open that the Orochi could take advantage of.”

“Wicked, you and Feng Wu Qing were originally from the same squad. Thus, the rapport between the two of you is good. You and Feng Wu Qing will be paired together.” When Wolf-dàgē was done, Wicked glanced at me hesitantly, but bore everyone’s interest in mind, and went to stand beside Wu Qing moodily.

“Prince, you’re the dexterous type. When paired with strong and steady Neurotic, you guys could help correct each other’s weaknesses.” When I heard Wolf-dàgē say this, I jogged over to Neurotic’s side. Neurotic then wrapped an arm around my shoulders in a friendly manner.

“Winter Triumph, your weapons are sharp claws. With this type of weapon, I guess you also belong to the dexterous type, right?” Wolf-dàgē asked and Winter Triumph nodded in affirmation. Wolf-dàgē then went on to finish the pairing up, “Then you pair up with Undying Man. Undying Man should be the strong and steady type.”

With the pairings done, the pairs went on to discuss fighting strategies. “Prince, where do you think would be best for us to attack from?” Neurotic asked me.

At Neurotic’s enquiry, I looked at the massive coiled snake and also did not know where and when to attack first. Suddenly a light bulb lit up in my mind. *In Second Life, almost every monster has a weakness. Attacking their weakness is definitely the key to defeating the monsters. What could this snake’s weakness be?*

“What’s a snake’s weakness?” I hollered.

“Weakness?” Neurotic didn’t answer in time and Undying Man shouted, “Oh yes, snakes have a seventh inch⁹. If we can find the seventh inch of the snake, we can easily defeat it.”

“The seventh inch! That’s it!” I yelled. *Yes, yes, I finally remember. Dad once cooked snake soup for Mum to nourish her skin.*

⁹ “...snakes have a seventh inch.”: According to Chinese belief, if you want to kill a snake you have to hit the seventh inch. That is, seven inches from the snake’s head. However, there are snakes of differing sizes, and some snakes are not even seven inches long, so this way of measuring is sometimes wrong. The seventh inch of the snake indicates where the snake’s heart is located, which is near the snake’s stomach. Therefore, by hitting the seventh inch of the snake, where the snake’s heart is, the snake will most definitely die. ”

I remembered one time when my family went on a camping trip and Mom was very startled by the sudden appearance of a snake. Just as she went to turn to her husband's embrace to weep, she found Dad was unexpectedly already hiding up a tree. In the end, Dad, Mom, and my little brother were screaming and hugging the tree like a family of Koalas.

At last I, who was forced by the whole family to go collect water, finally returned. Because I was busy looking at the trio who were screaming up in the tree, I unintentionally stepped on the goodhearted snake which had been helping me punish this vicious family. To make matters worse, I had stepped on that deadly place. Afterwards, as Dad was skinning the snake for the snake soup, he told me that was a snake's weakness—the seventh inch of the snake.

“Ahahaha, Yamata no Orochi you're dead meat! You dared to eat me. Just you wait, I will skin you and nibble on your flesh!” I gave the Orochi as ghastly smile, as though I were a serial killer who had spotted his prey. “Neurotic, we must attack the seventh inch of the snake with all our might. I'll take charge of finding the position of the snake's seventh inch. You cover my back first, and when I find the correct position, I will let you, who has more strength, take over. We'll definitely kill this damn snake.” I stared at Neurotic with glittering eyes.

Neurotic looked at me and hesitated for a while before answering. “I can finally see your brilliance,” he said.

“What did you say?” I asked with a drop of sweat running down the back of my head.

“Nothing, we'll do just what you said! Let's hurry; the other teams have already started their attacks,” Neurotic said while laughing heartily.

I turned quickly and saw that the other teams were already running to and fro across the snake, obviously looking for the seventh inch. I quickly ran forward, shouting, “Hurry, hurry, we can't let the others get to it first!”

I leapt onto the snake and Neurotic followed me closely. I looked back anxiously. After all, the rapport between me and Neurotic was not that great yet, and I still felt a bit apprehensive. However, Neurotic faithfully covered my back. He diligently drove back the snake heads that struck from behind and from the sides, and was never more than ten meters behind me.

After a while I completely trusted that Neurotic would cover my back. I concentrated on pushing back the oncoming snake heads, desperately searching for the seventh inch of the snake. My feet trampled everywhere, trying to detect the snake's weak spot.

I stepped somewhere abnormally soft on the snake, and the snake gave a sudden, violent tremble. I grinned. *Found it!* Immediately I bellowed, “Neurotic, here!”

Neurotic instantly rushed over to look at the place I had indicated, and confidently flashed me an OK sign. I nodded and said to him, “You concentrate on destroying the seventh inch; I will cover your back.”

After giving a loud war cry, Neurotic jumped up with both hands holding the Ultima Sword and buried it hilt deep into the seventh inch of the snake. The snake trashed about violently, and all the snake heads furiously surged toward us. Looking at the snake heads coming from all directions, I could only hold up the Black Dao and start capering about, hoping that I would be able to counter all the attacks aimed at Neurotic.

Trying to ward off all these snake heads...is a very difficult task, since there are eight heads in all! I only have 2 hands and a sword! It didn’t take long before I was out of breath, and Neurotic kept being interrupted by the attacking snake heads I couldn’t intercept, so he was unable to destroy the seventh inch.

“Be careful!” A shout reached me. I turned and saw as Undying Man rushed forth to deflect a snake head with a disgusting gaping maw.

“Thank you.” I looked gratefully at Undying Man. *He’s actually quite a good person!*

“No problem,” Undying Man said, acting cool. However, this was paired up with those Shoujo manga eyes... *Yuck!*

“Undying Man, you go help Neurotic destroy the seventh inch. Leave the rest to us!” Wicked also jumped over from another part of the snake to provide assistance, and Wu Qing, of course, had already begun battling the snake.

The six of us warriors fought with such strong teamwork, it was like we had trained in the same squad from the very beginning. Winter Triumph, with his shocking leaping ability, as if he never touched the ground for more than a second, was the worst nightmare for the snake heads with those sharp claws of his. Moreover, his claws would always rip at the lens of the snake’s eyes, making clear transparent mucus spray everywhere.

Feng Wu Qing’s rapier was next to useless up against the snake’s tough body. Thus, he could only desperately cut the snake... *No, cut the tongue. In full, it should be he cut the snake’s tongue*¹⁰. When the snake heads showed their tongues while hissing, that was when they had the worst luck.

¹⁰ “Cut the snake... No, cut the tongue.” In full, it should be he cut the snake’s tongue”: This is supposed to be a pun. “割蛇...不，是割舌，全名是割蛇舌” (gē shé...bù, shì gē shé, quán míng shì gē shé shé). The Chinese pronunciation of snake is shé. Likewise, the pronunciation for tongue is the same, shé.

Wicked and I were the most valuable ones there. We frantically protected Neurotic and Undying Man, who were desperately attacking the seventh inch of the snake. Vigilantly, we counterattacked the oncoming snake heads that were aimed at those two.

“Heya!” With Neurotic and Undying Man’s loud yell, a geyser of blood spurted out. The snake’s tremendous quaking sent us flying in all directions. I desperately held on to one of the tails that was thrashing about as if electrocuted, until finally it twitched with one last spasm and the tail came crashing down. Luckily, despite being shaken till my brains were addled, I was able to preserve my life by pure reflexes and was not crushed by it.

Just then, Lolidragon suddenly jumped up and down, yelling desperately. However, her voice was just too faint, and I had to concentrate on reading her lips. She seemed to be saying, “Hurry back! Meteor Shower!”

Meteor Shower? I looked at Yu Lian-dàsǎo who was standing to the side, concentrating on chanting a spell, and then up at the sky, where dark clouds were quickly gathering. *My God, the blaze of the first meteor has already appeared.* I hastily got up and ran desperately. *I don’t want to die because of my teammate’s spell right after surviving almost getting eaten by the snake or crushed by the snake’s tail!*

At last, with a slide, I escaped outside the Meteor Shower’s kill zone before it started the bombardment. I patted my chest fearfully, “Sc-scared me to death.”

“Couldn’t you guys release the spell later? It was enough that you wanted to kill me, but there were others present too!” I complained furiously. *The snake’s already dead, is there any reason to do this?*

“This is to train your spontaneity!” Lolidragon said, adhering to her accursed personality.

“Really? I thought you wanted to kill a particular someone, and thus told me to release Meteor Shower?” Yu Lian-dàsǎo said as she smiled sweetly, looking at someone—my little brother Feng Wu Qing. *So, the others and I were innocently caught in the middle of the love-hate relationship between those two enemies?*

Lolidragon, ignoring the daggers sent by my little brother, said in that confounding way of hers, “Excellent! Yamata no Orochi is just the first stage. Following this, there is the Mythical Kirin that makes Wrath of the Nine Heavens look like common magic, a storm beast that makes tornados, a real phoenix that can shoot volleys of deadly flame, and...many, many more. Good luck everyone!”

As we listened on our faces turned more and more morose. *Our future seems to be looking very bleak, you say? No, I suspect that we have no future at all...*



“Prince, do you plan to let Sunshine and Kenshin go with us to the Northern Continent?” Lolidragon suddenly asked one day, when I, with an ashen face and a half cooked body, had just finished fighting with some unknown beast.

I almost didn’t need to think and gave the reply by pure reflex. “I’m not planning to let them go,” I said.

Lolidragon pinched her nose and waved her hands at me disgustedly. ”Just answer me from far away. Don’t come close to me with that burnt face. It stinks!”

“Who do you think made me stay here, to turn into a human barbeque again and again?” I answered with my veins popping.

“You don’t plan to let them go? They are very strong, with strong fighting capabilities,” Lolidragon said sensibly.

“You already know about this. If they were to die, wouldn’t it be problematical?” I said matter-of-factly.

“Why don’t you ask them?” Lolidragon questioned. “Find out if they’re willing to go.”

I glared at Lolidragon. *It can’t be that she would make a scene and threaten to kill herself, just to force them to go?* Just when I thought about this, Lolidragon’s eyes told me: *Am I that kind of person?*

“If you promise me that you won’t force them to go, then I’ll help you call them here.” I said stubbornly.

“Alright, I swear on my reputation...” As Lolidragon began, I looked disbelievingly and scornfully at her. *Reputation? To Lolidragon, her reputation couldn’t be compared to even a pocket of a Chanel handbag.*

After receiving my distrustful glare, Lolidragon then remorsefully changed her words, “If I dare to force them...then I shall never again be able to buy a Chanel purse!”

Seeing Lolidragon’s painful face, I nodded my head in satisfaction. This time, Lolidragon wouldn’t dare to force them. I confidently PM-ed Kenshin and Sunshine, and while waiting for them to arrive chatted leisurely with Lolidragon. “How’s the situation regarding Gui’s suggestion of the ND?”

“It has been developed, but there’s this one flaw that could not be removed.” Lolidragon answered while frowning. “The original program present in HD makes it so that when an NPC kills a player, not only will the player disappear but so will the NPC. This is also present in the ND.”

Hearing this, I stood up in shock, “You mean that the player who kills the Dictator of Life will die along with him?”

At Lolidragon’s nod, my heart became confused and frantic. *I had originally wanted to kill the Dictator of Life myself. Now the price of killing the Dictator of Life is that I will also vanish? Will Prince vanish forever then?*

“Don’t worry. We won’t install it in you. The company will send someone along with us,” Lolidragon consoled me, not knowing that these words made my heart sink even deeper.

After giving it much thought, I finally made my decision. “Lolidragon, install ND in me!”

“What?” Lolidragon was stunned. “Are you crazy? Didn’t you hear me just now, the character will vanish. It will vanish, do you hear?”

“I understand.” *I also don’t want to disappear. However, I really want to do this,* “But, I really want to kill the Dictator of Life myself.”

“Why? Isn’t it fine if someone from the company kills him?” Lolidragon asked confusedly.

“Lolidragon, what kind of attitude do you think the person sent from your company will have when he battles the Dictator of Life?” I asked gravely.

“I don’t understand you,” Lolidragon hesitated.

“Because I have been with Sunshine and Kenshin for so long, I do not regard them as NPCs. Thus, I’m also unable to regard the Dictator of Life as a common NPC.”

I took in a deep breath, “Therefore, I would hold the mentality of killing another player when I go to kill the Dictator of Life. This is very different from someone from your company, who would bring along the mentality of eliminating a virus.”

Lolidragon brooded for quite a while, and then said forcefully, “But your character will disappear. That means that Prince will disappear forever.”

“True, I don’t want to disappear. But the Dictator of Life also doesn’t want to disappear,” I said a little dejectedly.

“Prince, I will give you three more days to decide. After three days, tell me whether you really want to install the ND program in your character’s body.” After giving me the deadline, Lolidragon added, “Prince, I hope you will change your decision before the three days are up.”

Despite knowing that Lolidragon said this for my own good, I knew I would never regret my decision.

“Prince, you were looking for us?” Sunshine came through the door with Kenshin silently following behind... *Why did Cold Fox come too? It seems that Cold Fox sticks to Kenshin as much as Celestial sticks to Doll.*

“Let me ask you guys... You probably don’t want to go to the Northern Continent, right?” I asked carefully.

Sunshine frowned, “I want to go. I want to fight alongside Fairsky!”

I was stunned. I was expecting that at most it would be Kenshin who wanted to go, but it was actually Sunshine who wanted to. I hurriedly said, “Sunshine you can’t go. If something were to happen to you, Fairsky would cry herself to death.”

“But I don’t want to stay in the Central Continent and stupidly wait for you all to come back,” Sunshine shouted. “I want to fight alongside all of you. At least then I would have tried, and would have a clear conscience for Fairsky and myself.”

I was dumbfounded. *Since when was Sunshine so fierce? He has become more and more human-like.*

“Love really makes one become more mature.” Lolidragon shook her head, and then patted my shoulder. “I think you would not be able to stop Sunshine.”

I was speechless. I anxiously turned to Kenshin and asked, “What about you, Kenshin? Don’t tell me that you want to go too?”

Kenshin was silent for a while, and then said, “I want to go.”

My mouth dropped open. *What’s happening? Are they implying that they don’t want to live? Or that they think they have a second life in the real world, like me?*

“Alright, things will be as decided then. Kenshin, Sunshine, you guys come with me. I have something else to tell you.” Lolidragon indicated for them to follow her. I saw that gesture, and went forward too.

“Don’t come, Prince. I only want to talk to these two.” Lolidragon stopped me.

This made me suspicious. *It could not be that Lolidragon still wanted to do something bad to them, right?*

“Don’t worry; I swear that I won’t harm them. It’s just that this matter is for them alone to know,” Lolidragon explained. However, how could I possibly back off? I couldn’t

afford to risk it. Lolidragon spread out her hands and glared at me. “Why not let them decide if they want to follow me by themselves then.”

Sunshine looked at the frustrated Lolidragon and the stubborn me, and decided to placate me. “Prince, I believe Lolidragon wouldn’t harm us. Just let us go with her for a bit, alright?”

After hearing this, I could only stand gloomily with Cold Fox and send the trio off.

At that point, I suddenly remembered something. *What were Cold Fox’s thoughts about Kenshin, after following him for so long, and then finding out he was actually an NPC?* I could not help but ask, “Cold Fox, did you already know that Kenshin was an NPC?”

“Yes,” came Cold Fox’s concise reply.

“And you don’t mind?” *It couldn’t be that this fella was so indifferent that he didn’t mind knowing the truth, even after being around someone who was in fact not human?*

“I didn’t really mind, I only had a few questions.”

“What questions?” I asked curiously.

“Whether it’s possible to change his gender to female, and then sell him to me?” Cold Fox asked. A moment later he added, “If that’s possible, could you make him stronger, too?”

...

“This way, I need not look for a sparring partner and a girlfriend separately.” The way Cold Fox put it seemed as if it was far too troublesome to have a girlfriend and a sparring partner be two different people.

I must keep this in mind, and remember to tell Kenshin about this later. I have to warn him to stay away from Cold Fox. If not, then one day... Cold Fox may resent the fact that changing Kenshin to a female is too troublesome, and may just... Then, that would be a terrible situation!

Chapter 6: The Great NPC Revolt

“Prince! All of you must not leave the training grounds, no matter what,” White Bird suddenly PM-ed me one day, completely bewildering me. There was a tone of uneasiness in her message that gave me a perturbed sense of foreboding.

“Why?” I PM-ed back immediately.

White Bird hesitated for a long moment, refusing to explain the reason. *Something definitely must have happened.* Anxious, I asked, “White Bird, hurry and tell me! What happened? If you still refuse to say anything, I’m going to dash out of the training grounds right now.”

Upon hearing that, White Bird roared, “Do not leave no matter what!”

What exactly happened that would make even the composed White Bird yell like this? Well, she does yell at me often, but... Since White Bird was still unwilling to tell the reason, I would have to force it out of her. “I am already at the exit of the training grounds. If you still do not tell me the reason, I’m going to leave. I’ll count down from three. Three, two—”

“Wait, I’ll tell!” White Bird finally yelled. “The Dictator of Life has sent a huge number of NPCs to Infinite City!”

The Dictator of Life has sent a huge number of NPCs to Infinite City? I almost could not believe what I had just heard. *Didn’t Lolidragon say that the Dictator of Life was sealed in the Northern Continent?* I immediately ran toward the control area, wanting to hear a proper answer from Lolidragon.

“Lolidragon!” I roared. “Infinite City is being surrounded by NPCs!”

“There is no need for you to shout that loudly; I already know about it.” Lolidragon’s reaction was calm beyond my expectations.

Lolidragon knew? “Didn’t you say that the Dictator of Life was sealed in the Northern Continent by the game company?” I hurriedly asked.

“Yes, it is true that the Dictator of Life cannot escape from the Northern Continent, but that does not mean that the NPCs he has created cannot escape,” Lolidragon said, her expression bleak.

“What shall we do then? Infinite City has already been surrounded.” Clenching my fists, I thought, *There are still so many friends of mine outside; how can I stay in the training*

grounds at ease and watch them painfully battle against the NPCs? And then disappear forever?

“You are not allowed to go out!” Lolidragon said, emphasizing each word.

Stubbornly, I roared, “I need to get out! I can’t ignore my companions outside!”

“Prince, you can’t leave.” The others actually walked forward to persuade me. *Could all of them possibly want to turn a blind eye to those who were outside?*

I turned toward Wicked and asked him accusingly, “Do you know that Dark Emperor is together out there with your brother?”

“I do.” Wicked’s expression changed marginally as he clenched his fists tightly. “But the situation would not improve if we went out there. We’d only be getting ourselves killed for nothing.”

“I’m going out,” I said again seriously.

“No,” everyone replied together.

“Alright then, I’m leaving!” I patted my Black Dao and then walked toward the rainbow-colored glowing door without looking back.

Neurotic broke out in sweat and asked, “Are you guys sure that Prince understands everyday language?”

“Prince, are you missing the big picture again?” Lolidragon was so angry that she rushed up to me and grabbed my hand.

I turned back and gave Lolidragon a determined look. “No, but not forsaking my friends is one of the principles that I will never break.”

“What will happen if you die?” Lolidragon’s expression had relaxed slightly, but her mouth was still tight.

“I won’t!” *Looks like Lolidragon is not persisting anymore.* I smiled at her as I replied, but felt that it was not appropriate enough and immediately added, “I probably won’t...”

Three black lines ran down Lolidragon’s face. “Stop talking. The more you talk, the more I don’t feel like letting you go out.”

“Then I’m going. Don’t follow me you guys.” Waving without looking back, I walked through the rainbow-colored glowing door.

Just as I stepped out of the training grounds, I was greeted by a variety of expressive eyes, namely White Bird with a dumbfounded look, Ming Huang with an ‘I knew it’ look, Rose looking at me helplessly... But no matter who, everyone had a “What did you come out for?” expression.

Meeting everyone’s wide eyes for a long moment, I only raised my hand and greeted, “Long time no see.”

“What do you mean ‘long time no see’? Didn’t I just tell you not to come out here?” White Bird was so furious that her face had turned crimson. I suspect that she might be close to bursting a blood vessel.

Ming Huang, with an expression that made me want to punch him, said, “I told you so. If you don’t warn him, he wouldn’t necessarily come out, but if you warn him, then we can all just prepare to come to the training ground entrance to meet him. Also, everyone who had placed bets that Prince wouldn’t come, don’t forget to give me your wagers.”

Scratching my head, I asked, “What’s the situation now?”

“Look upwards!” Ming Huang said.

I looked upwards obediently, only now seeing an unusual sight. The sky was filled with a huge number of attractive angels flying all over the city. I couldn’t help but be moved and shouted, “Wow, angels!”

“Look left and right!” White Bird immediately told me.

I looked toward the left and right obediently, sudden realizing that there was something unusual about the people walking around. The person nearest to us had a porcupine hairstyle with large spikes of golden hair and was wearing a golden martial arts uniform...

“Never did I think...that in my lifetime I would be able to see a Super Saiyan¹¹,” I said calmly.

Suddenly, someone patted my right shoulder and a dark shadow fell over me. Furthermore, everyone was looking at the person behind me with fearful expressions... *I suppose whatever is behind me is definitely not anything good.* Gathering up my courage, I turned around...

“Excuse me, may I ask if you would help me untangle myself?” asked an octopus that had somehow inexplicably managed to knot its own legs into dead knots.

¹¹ “Super Saiyan”: A reference to the Dragonball manga/anime. Once characters turn Super Saiyan, they become super-powered up and their hair turns golden.

Struck speechless, I battled with the octopus' eight soft legs for a few minutes before I finally managed to untie that terrifying knot. I wiped off the sweat on my forehead. "It's undone."

The octopus let out a very happy expression... Uh, at least according to my observation, it should be a happy expression. And it even used six 'hands' to bid farewell to me (two of its 'hands' were being used as legs). "Thank you, goodbye."

I waved goodbye cheerfully. *How surprising that, in the recent times when even humans are not very courteous, I could actually meet an octopus that is so polite!*

I tilted my head slightly and thought for a long while. "Can someone tell me the situation now?"

How come this was a bit different from what I had imagined? Initially I thought that the sky would have an endless number of dragons breathing fire everywhere, that there would be terrifying squads of corpses crawling from underneath the ground, that AOE magic which could destroy the sky and earth would be released everywhere, that horrifying wails would be coming from all directions, and that bright lights would be shooting across Infinite City like fireworks, turning it into a purgatory on Earth... But, for some reason, what was happening around me could not be predicted by a normal viewpoint.

The angels were not carrying bows and arrows, holy swords, etc, but were instead carrying musical instruments and flying around playing music and singing. I was fine with this—it was only fair! Humans had human rights, angels had the right to sing too, but... Aren't the angels in the legends supposed to play music so beautiful that humans could call them angelic tunes? Then why did I hear the sounds of broken gongs and trumpets, not to mention off-tone singing that could only be heard at a funeral, if you were ever 'lucky' enough to attend one?

What is happening nowadays? Even angels are tone-deaf! Or is this the legendary Sound Wave Attack?

Of course I did not mind the scene in the café, where the crowds were trying to hit on each other; everyone had the right to hit on others and to be hit on, but why? Why do I see Frieza trying to hit on Son Goku¹²? Orochimaru flirting with Sasuke...¹³ *These images are horrifying beyond words! I can't be wrong; this must be a mind attack! Too terrifying...*

¹² "Frieza trying to hit on Son Goku": A reference to the Dragonball Z manga/anime. Frieza and Goku are enemies.

¹³ "Orochimaru flirting with Sasuke...": A reference to the Naruto manga/anime. Orochimaru is one of the antagonists.

Compared to the terrifying actions in front of me, the other things—Snow White happily talking about the latest anti-aging products with the evil witch, zombies and vampires drinking tomato juice on the dais of the Infinity City tavern, the Little Mermaid pulling out a sword stuck in a stone—really weren't worth me getting shocked over.

"What a chaotic yet peaceful fairyland!" I couldn't help but admire the extremely peaceful scene in front of me.

"It's not very peaceful at all!" White Bird said helplessly.

"Celestial just came out and announced that if we attack the Northern Continent, these 'peaceful creatures' will immediately become evil monsters and completely destroy Infinite City," Ming Huang said unhappily.

"How do they know that we're preparing to attack the Northern Continent?" I asked gravely. *Could there be a spy?*

"...Is there anyone in Second Life that doesn't know?" White Bird questioned stiffly.

I rubbed the back of my head helplessly. "Eh? That's true..."

"Right now, I think it's time to ask what we should do next," White Bird said helplessly.

Before I could answer her question, I saw something that almost made my eyes pop out. *Kenshin actually let a woman hold onto him while walking?* I immediately pushed past all the obstacles in front of me and in an instant moved to Kenshin's side. "Kenshin, when did you find a girlfriend?"

After seeing what Kenshin was holding to his chest, I nearly caught the "permanently dislodged jaw disease." I could only ask, stammering, "The baby you're holding can't be yours, right?" *When did you have a child? How come I seem to remember you didn't have one a few days ago?*

"You recognize me?" Kenshin asked me suddenly.

It can't be that once you had a wife and a child, you forgot me completely? My feeling was like that of an abandoned mistress. *It's not as if I wouldn't let you marry and raise a child; you don't need to pretend to not recognize me, right?*

I was so grieved that I went and hid myself at the side of the road to kick at small stones, and even squatted and began to draw circles. I squatted and squatted, but in front of me suddenly appeared a pair of familiar shoes. *Wearing socks with sandals, aren't those Kenshin's standard shoes?* I raised my head. Kenshin stood in front of me with an expression that was dark to the extreme. *But...wasn't my back facing Kenshin?*

Feeling that I seemed to be missing something, I immediately stood up and looked behind me, but the Kenshin with his family was still standing where I'd left him. I looked back in front of me, but at my side was a Kenshin with a dark expression. *Two Kenshins!*

There is only one truth! Therefore...there should only be one real Kenshin, right? But to find out which one is the real one, I only need see where 'that fellow' is! Without much effort, I looked behind the Kenshin with the dark expression and found Cold Fox.

I immediately pointed and said, "Cold Fox is over here, so you're the real Kenshin!"

Still recovering from my earlier shock, I patted my chest. "Luckily this bastard, Cold Fox, never takes a step from Kenshin's side, or else I really don't know how I would have figured it out!"

"..." Speechless, Kenshin only stared at me in response, his dark expression replaced by an exasperated one.

"But really, what is this situation? How come there's an extra Kenshin?" I was completely perplexed.

At this time, the fake Kenshin suddenly walked toward the real Kenshin with a small smile and said, "I am here to pass on a message."

"What message?" Kenshin replied coldly. Following his gaze, I realized that Kenshin wasn't looking at the fake Kenshin, but rather at the woman at the fake Kenshin's side. *A kimono, hair tied back into a pony-tail... Is that Kaoru?* I suddenly understood.

"So long as you join the Dictator's ranks and come back to the Northern Continent with me, Kaoru will be yours," the fake Kenshin said without caring in the slightest that he himself was currently hugging Kaoru.

I was stunned. Kenshin was stunned as well. Really, everyone was stunned. *If you want to recruit, you shouldn't recruit in front of the other person's boss; the boss should never be totally disregarded!! Especially when the boss is me!*

Slightly worried, I looked at Kenshin. *Kenshin couldn't possibly submit as soon as he sees Kaoru, right?*

"You should head over there." The fake Kenshin handed Kaoru the child, letting her know that she should go to the real Kenshin's side.

Wearing an expression of pure happiness while holding the baby, Kaoru walked toward Kenshin step by step, and time seemed to pass in slow motion. As she approached, Kenshin had a conflicted expression that I had never seen before, and the fake Kenshin's smile grew wider and wider.

Finally, Kaoru stood only one step away from Kenshin, those emotional eyes fixed on him, and the two seemed to be able to gaze at each other until the end of time. Even I couldn't help but be touched...

"So? Why don't you join our ranks?" These soft words from the fake Kenshin made my heart thump furiously. *Could it be that Kenshin and I are going to become enemies?*

"Please don't leave me? Kenshin?" Kaoru piteously begged.

"Kaoru..." Kenshin caressed her face affectionately.

"Ah!" Kaoru suddenly screamed as an unseen force pulled her back to the fake Kenshin's side.

Kenshin immediately began to chase after her, but Cold Fox abruptly grabbed him. Unable to go to Kaoru's side, Kenshin angrily glared at Cold Fox. With a voice so icy that even I couldn't help but shiver, he growled, "Let go of me!"

Ignoring Kenshin's wintry tone, Cold Fox only calmly asked, "Are you sure that that is what you want?"

"Of course I want Kaoru!" Kenshin shouted angrily.

"Are you sure that that is your Kaoru?" Cold Fox questioned.

Kenshin was stunned. He looked at Kaoru uncertainly, and she began to sob softly. The scene really was tragically beautiful and touching. Even a Shakespearean romance would be hard-pressed to compare; and the famous Butterfly Lovers¹⁴ could only stand at the side...

"Bastard!" Ming Huang suddenly hit me violently and, in exasperation, yelled, "Others are feeling sentimental and yet you're eating popcorn!"

I, feeling persecuted, met everyone's furious eyes. "Is eating popcorn wrong? Eating Poca is too noisy; I was afraid I would affect the atmosphere so I switched to eating popcorn, a less noisy snack."

"Eating anything is forbidden!" everyone roared in unison.

"Ay..." Kenshin looked back at me with an extremely helpless expression. I could only put my hands together in repentance.

¹⁴ "Butterfly Lovers": A Chinese legend of a tragic love story between Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai. This story is often regarded as the Chinese equivalent of Romeo and Juliet.

When Kenshin turned around again to look at Kaoru, his complexion changed. He furrowed his brow deeper and deeper. Finally, he opened his mouth to ask, “Why hasn’t your expression changed at all? If even I couldn’t help but turn around to glare at Prince, how is it possible that Kaoru, who has a quicksilver temper, didn’t react?” Kenshin muttered, staring at the still painfully sobbing Kaoru.

“This pisses me off; this isn’t my wife!” an angry yell came from the skies, and then something fell to the earth with a thump.

Kenshin had almost thought it through, yet suddenly Cheng Yaojin¹⁵ interferes and even randomly throws around trash! Completely livid, I looked up at the sky to see who the bastard without any thought of environmental protection was.

“Oh no, Doll!” White Bird and Ming Huang suddenly shrieked in surprise, rushing over to the large piece of trash.

Doll? What does the large piece of trash have to do with Doll? I was baffled, but when I saw what the large piece of trash was, my heart immediately constricted. *That’s Doll! Piteously lying on the ground and lying spread eagled is Doll!*

“Doll!” In an instant, I was at her side. Seeing her wide, soulless eyes, I was completely at a loss and could only keep calling her, yet I did not get the slightest reaction.

Who is it? Who’s the bastard that dropped Doll from the sky? I raised my head to look up at the sky. From between grinding teeth I spat, “Celestial!”

“Ming Huang! Strike him down!” I yelled angrily.

I had just finished yelling when ten lightning bolts struck out. Celestial was lightly moving like a gust of wind, easily dodging those lightning bolts. I was so furious, I was almost crazy, bitterly wishing that I could be like the angels in the sky and sprout wings so that I could tear Celestial into pieces.

Celestial only giggled. “Why are you angry? It’s not like that is my wife.”

“What did you say?” I was completely perplexed by his words.

¹⁵ “Cheng Yaojin”: A general of the Tang Dynasty, but in folk stories, he started out as a peasant leader fighting for justice who was forced to become a bandit. He is said to be a reckless and straightforward person, who would charge at enemies suddenly and unexpectedly. The Chinese saying “半路□□□□□□” literally means “Halfway through the road, Cheng Yaojin attacks unexpectedly,” though its use here means “a person who appears unexpectedly.”

“This isn’t the real Doll, it’s a fake!” White Bird said, startled. “This is a dead NPC, not a player.”

“Fake?” I hurriedly squatted down to investigate. She was right; this Doll’s eyes were wide open and completely lifeless. If she were the real Doll, she should have long since become a white light and flown away, yet she continued to lie there... While I was still reasoning it out, she slowly became transparent, just like how a typical NPC monster would die; it probably wouldn’t be long before she disappeared completely!

Looks like this really isn’t Doll. I sighed in relief, but I couldn’t help but start to scold Celestial, “You bastard, are you trying to scare me to death? Why would you create an NPC like Doll for no reason? And even randomly throw it around!”

Celestial’s mouth tightened. “The Dictator was the one who made this for me; it’s not like I was the one who made it.”

Coldly, I mocked, “I am eighty percent certain that the reason the Dictator of Life made Doll for you is so that you can practice your ‘Honey, Honey Continuous Name Calling Technique’ on it instead of him!”

“How did you know?” Celestial asked suspiciously.

That’s really the truth? “Guessed...”

“She and Doll are still different?” Kenshin suddenly raised his head and asked Celestial.

Hearing this question, Celestial was actually furious to the point of yelling and screaming. “Different is different! When I licked her, she wouldn’t slap me like my wife; when I gave her something to eat, she would actually say thank you, and when she finished eating one pack of pastries, she would say she’s full. How is that my wife? Absolutely not!”

That definitely is not Doll...

“I don’t want this kind of fake!” Celestial was so angry that he came down and kicked the fake Doll to the side.

“Me too,” Kenshin suddenly said serenely. “I also don’t want a fake. Kaoru...exists in my memories.” He didn’t look at the fake Kaoru again. Instead, he turned around to leave and said, “Let’s go get tea, Fox.”

Cold Fox only raised his eyebrows, and followed Kenshin without a word.

“How cool!” I praised. *Kenshin really is Kenshin.* I couldn’t help but gleefully look at the fake Kenshin and Kaoru. The two of them didn’t look surprised. They walked away expressionlessly, becoming part of the surrounding messy scene.

“I want to see my wife. Can you take me to her?” Standing at my side, Celestial actually had a pleading expression on his androgynous face, giving me goosebumps all over my skin.

“No!” I refused instantly.

“Why?” Celestial was so furious that he was spinning in circles in his spot, continuing to rant without stopping. “I want to see my wife. I want to see my wife. Let me see her!”

“You’re really stubborn. You’ve really only known Doll for not even a few hours, so how come you keep bothering her without letting go?” *Even falling in love at first sight shouldn’t be like this, right?*

“Because when I woke up, the first thing I saw was my wife,” Celestial answered with an idiotic smile.

“Woke up?” I asked suspiciously. *It can’t be...*

“Yes. When I first met you two, I was actually half dreaming, half awake,” Celestial said, tilting his head slightly. He looked a bit curious, yet amused. “Afterward, when I brought my wife home, she slapped me and finally woke me up.”

Doll... Did you know that your slaps made a person like an extremely sticky piece of gum glue himself to you? I really was helpless three times over.

“Can you let me see my wife—?” Celestial had barely finished speaking when his eyes suddenly began to shine. He looked behind me and before I knew it, he had pushed me and sent me flying to the side. I glanced back just in time to see an emotional Celestial running toward Doll.

Slap! Slap!

I opened my mouth and, disbelieving, asked, “...Doll, why did you slap him?”

Doll had a face of complete innocence. As if she had been wronged, she said, “Doesn’t he like it when I slap him? That’s why I did it...”

I don’t think that was what he meant, right? I could see that Celestial’s tears were on the verge of leaking out. The situation was really unusual; Celestial was half kneeling and half sobbing, and the responsible party, Doll, actually had an expression of innocence.

Perhaps the one that needs protection isn't Doll, but rather Celestial, who will need to apply for protection against domestic violence.

"Your Highness, what exactly is the situation now?" Gui furrowed his brows, looking at the strange scenes surrounding us.

I waved my hand. "I don't know; ask that bastard!" I pointed at the abused NPC, Celestial, who was currently pulling at Doll's skirt.

"Prince-gēgē is asking you a question. Hurry and answer him," Doll ordered, actually taking up a fierce role and facing Celestial with her fists on her hips.

"Oh." Celestial obediently pulled himself up and answered. "These are all NPCs sent by the Dictator. Once the Dictator knew that you wanted to attack the Northern Continent, he decided to strike first and send these NPCs to watch you. If you guys take any action, these NPCs will attack you."

This will be troublesome. Under this sort of monitor, how are we going to carry out making a ship to attack the Northern Continent?

"All of these are sentient NPCs?" Gui asked, face grim.

Celestial wore an expression that seemed to say "how could that be possible?" and waved his hand, saying, "It's not like that. How could there be so many self-aware NPCs? Even the Dictator has been having trouble finding more comrades! These are only normal NPCs."

"No wonder! No wonder the Dictator of Life has put up with you until now and hasn't gotten rid of you yet. He couldn't find other comrades, so he had no choice," I muttered to myself. If it wasn't like that, then someone like Celestial, who had scarce accomplishments yet excessive losses and even spilled everything to the enemy, would have been hacked back to rebirth one hundred times by the Dictator of Life.

Since Celestial was currently answering a hundred percent of my questions, I decided to clear up all of my quandaries. "Celestial, is the Dictator of Life a warrior or a mage?"

"I don't know. I haven't seen the Dictator attack personally." Celestial tilted his head, considering the question for a moment before he said, "Probably a mage. He often throws me around in mid air."

"Throws you around? Is his temper really bad?" I furrowed my brow.

"No, the Dictator's temper is very good," said Celestial. "Not like the others; I only say a few words and they look as if they want to kill me."

“Others?” I couldn’t help but ask suspiciously. *This is the first time I’ve heard of any others.*

Celestial scratched his head. “Mm. Called something like the Four Heavenly Kings. I think they’re called something like Ocean’s Heart, Flowing Wind, Scorching Flame... Uh... What was the last one called?”

“Clay Child.”

Celestial looked as though he had been struck by lightning. “Yes, yes, Clay Child.”

“Geez, even though I’m the one you’re on best terms with, why am I the only one you can’t remember?” a child’s voice complained. I watched as a plump child, who was wearing a yellow undergarment covering his chest and abdomen, slowly descended from the sky while standing on a golden skateboard.

“Clay Child, why have you come?” Celestial happily grabbed Clay Child’s small hand and sprinted to Doll’s side. Holding Clay Child up in front of Doll, he said, “Look, this is my wife. Isn’t she cute!”

Clay Child had an obviously exasperated expression. “She *is* very cute.”

“You’re also very cute.” Doll couldn’t help but grab Clay Child from Celestial’s grasp and hold him to her chest to play with him. Clay Child actually didn’t seem to mind, apparently already long since used to it. He let Doll pinch his cheeks and throw him up and down.

“But, have you completely forgotten the Dictator’s orders?” Clay Child couldn’t help but remind Celestial.

Stupefied, Celestial asked, “The Dictator? What did he ask of me?”

Clay Child fell from Doll’s hands and landed flat on his back. With some difficulty, he pulled himself back onto his feet and, still exasperated, said, “No wonder the other Heavenly Kings don’t like you. If it weren’t for the Dictator not letting us kill each other, I think you would have long since been murdered by the others.”

“Exactly what did the Dictator ask of me?” Celestial questioned with a face full of innocence.

“Didn’t the Dictator get fed up with you always calling after your wife, so he told you to join up with me, capture your wife, and take her back to the Northern Continent?” Clay Child said unhappily. “Do you know how long I waited for you? If I hadn’t guessed that you probably came directly to the Central Continent, I would probably still be waiting for you in the Northern Continent.”

Capture Doll! I had originally been listening to Celestial and Clay Child talk, laughing so hard that I almost couldn't breathe, but my smile immediately froze on my face. In a flash, I grabbed Doll's hands and ran to the training ground entrance. *I don't know why, but I have a feeling that if I don't hurry and get in, Doll will disappear forever.*

"You want to run? Earth Wall!" Clay Child's young, child-like voice said. A towering wall instantly appeared from the ground before me. I almost couldn't stop myself from running into it.

"Block them; I'll get Doll inside the training ground first!" I roared at my comrades behind me, but in actuality they had already started moving and everyone was beginning to attack Clay Child and Celestial.

I'll come back as soon as possible. Seeing my comrades in the middle of battle, I put all my efforts into carrying Doll and sprinting, silently praying in my heart: *Absolutely don't let anything happen to anyone!*

"Gah! I tripped," I loudly yelled my predicament as I stumbled, which was then followed by a very loud *thud*.

I painfully groaned before slowly pulling myself back up, but just when I wanted to continue running, I realized that Doll, who had been in my hands, had disappeared. I was so startled that I turned around frantically to look for her, only to stop when I heard Celestial start to berate me.

"What the hell are you doing?! You almost tossed my wife away! If you injured her, I'll make you pay!"

I raised my head and saw Celestial carrying Doll while floating in the air. *Crap! Celestial won't take Doll back just like this, will he?*

"That didn't take any effort at all...." Clay Child wore an expression of complete helplessness and even shook his head while looking at me. "I really don't know why the Dictator considers a brute like you as his main enemy, even going so far as to say that we can't kill you because he wants to deal with you personally."

Clay Child stepped on his skateboard and glided to Celestial's side. "Let's go. It's time to return to the Northern Continent."

"I don't want to! I don't want to go to the Northern Continent!" Doll was so terrified that her face had become deathly pale.

Celestial revealed an injured expression. "Why? Wife, you don't want to go back with me?"

“I don’t want to go to the Northern Continent! I want to be with everyone,” Doll’s tears were almost brimming over, and she pleaded piteously. “Celestial, how about you stay here?”

Celestial even murmured “oh,” and then said, “Okay, if my wife doesn’t want to go to the Northern Continent, then I’ll stay here instead.”

For the second time, Clay Child fell from his skateboard, this time falling from a height of over ten meters; it was so painful that he wailed for a good while before he had the strength to say, “You—Don’t stir up trouble! Celestial, do you plan on betraying the Dictator?”

“What do you mean, betray the Dictator? I only want to stay with my wife.” Celestial had a completely uncomprehending expression.

Talking with this bastard is useless! I could “see” this same thought on everyone’s faces.

Clay Child held his forehead for a long moment before he said helplessly, “Alright, then you can stay here for now since there are so many NPCs here. They should be enough to prevent you from being killed by humans. I’ll go back and ask the Dictator before deciding what to do.

“Ah, ah, if the other three Heavenly Kings hear about this, they’ll definitely dislike you even more,” Clay Child complained again as he stepped onto his skateboard and glided toward the north.

We looked up at the departing Clay Child, looked right and left at the messy scenes around us, and then helplessly heard the “*Pa! Pa!*” of another two slaps. *What exactly do we do now?*

“So now scores of NPCs and even Celestial are staying here. What should we do with our plan?” My mind was in complete chaos, so I could only throw the problem to the ones who had caught up to me, the ones who did my thinking for me.

Lolidragon knitted her brows together. “Celestial... He couldn’t have been sent to watch Infinite City’s movements, could he?”

“Shouldn’t be. He was just doggedly trying to take Doll to the Den of Wandering Nymphs to play,” I said honestly.

“If the Dictator of Life were stupid enough to send that bastard to spy, then he should be called the Piglet of Life, not the Dictator of Life¹⁶,” Ming Huang mocked unsympathetically.

“Still, this means that we need to change our strategy.” Lolidragon rubbed her temples. “What should we do?”

Gui said coldly, “Why do we need to change our strategy? Fighting on the Northern Continent and fighting on the Central Continent are the same. Anyway, this battle’s main purpose is to distract the Dictator of Life, giving the Execution Squad the opportunity to reach the Dictator.”

“Still, we need to find an alternative first,” Gui said gravely as he closed his eyes. “If Prince and the others don’t appear in our fighting force, then the Dictator of Life will definitely discover our plan.”

“Lolidragon, can you tell your programmers to develop a disguise skill for us to use? This kind of small thing should be doable, right?” Gui questioned Lolidragon.

“It should be,” Lolidragon said after thinking about it for a moment.

“Then this should work...” Gui furrowed his brows. “Although, I’ve been having some suspicions.”

“Suspicious about what?” I asked curiously.

Gui hesitated for a moment before saying, “I think that the Dictator of Life knows our every move. He sent Kaoru to entice Kenshin to join his side, yet has not made any attempts toward Sunshine. Just from this, we can tell that he most likely knows about Sunshine and Fairsky’s relationship.”

“But they got together before the game company sealed away the Dictator of Life, so it isn’t unusual that the Dictator of Life would know about that, right?” Lolidragon protested in disagreement.

“No, I think that even now, he knows our every move,” Gui said calmly. “When I think about this carefully, the Dictator of Life’s control over Second Life is very extensive. He may have over a hundred methods to know our movements such as, for example, making an NPC as small as or even smaller than a mosquito to eavesdrop on our conversations.”

¹⁶ “...He should be called the Piglet of Life, not the Dictator of Life.”: This is a pun where the characters for “Dictator” in “the Dictator of Life” are replaced with characters that are pronounced almost the same in Chinese as “Dictator” but mean something very different. 主宰 (zhǔzǎi), Dictator, was replaced with 豬仔 (zhūzǎi), which means young pig.

“Then isn’t that very bad? Doesn’t that mean that he may have long since known about our plan to secretly go to the Northern Continent?” I gulped. *Even killing the Dictator of Life when he’s not prepared has a low enough success rate, but now that he knows...? Doesn’t this mean that we’ll go but never come back?*

“Mm. So that’s why I don’t understand: Why doesn’t he kill us? Apart from the assassins from before, he hasn’t sent anyone else to kill us. Before, I always thought that we really had no way to match him. The Dictator of Life probably has at least over a hundred methods he can use to get rid of us.” Gui looked as if his brain might burst from exertion. “It doesn’t make sense. It really doesn’t make sense.”

“Isn’t his purpose to force all humans out of Second Life?” Gui scratched his head and then muttered to himself, “He only needs to send out a bunch of NPCs with the HD program to massacre us, so why is he still staying his hand? Why does he only threaten us?”

Seeing Gui’s mystification, I distinctly felt that having too much intelligence was not necessarily good: it’s very likely to make you think too much and make your brain explode. *I have it so much better!* I completely did not understand what part of the Dictator’s actions did not make sense.

He’s waiting for you.

A familiar voice suddenly entered my ear. *Isn’t that Celestial’s voice? But isn’t Celestial with Doll, playing around outside the city? And it looks like no one else is reacting to these words.*

The Dictator of Life has always been waiting for you, Prince. Go. Go to the Northern Continent to find him! If you’re late, then you might not make it in time.

“Won’t make it in time for what?” I said, startled, but I only received suspicious looks that everyone cast my way.

Hurry! He’s waiting for you.

“Waiting for me? Why?” I asked suspiciously. However, Celestial did not answer me again.

“Prince?” Gui hesitantly asked as he looked at me.

Uncomprehendingly, I turned around. *What exactly was that? Why are things only getting more and more complicated? Why is the Dictator of Life waiting for me? Is he waiting for me to drink tea with him?*

Chapter 7: The Day Before Setting Off

“You’ve really decided to set out tomorrow?” Nan Gong Zui asked me several times in disbelief.

“Yes!” I patiently answered him over and over again. I’m aware that setting out tomorrow might be a little too sudden, but I have a feeling that the sooner we reach the Northern Continent, the better. It’s not Celestial’s words that make me feel like this, but another strange feeling, as if... something in the Northern Continent is calling to me. To me, it feels like even setting out tomorrow will be too late.

“The deadline of twenty-one days is still a ways away. Why are you in such a rush? It wouldn’t hurt to wait until we have a better plan...” Lolidragon said hesitantly.

“I have to go. There’s something there, calling out to me,” I replied while staring toward the distant Northern Continent, although I had no idea what awaited me there. The Dictator of Life? That can’t be right; why would he be waiting for me? Waiting for me to chop him up?

“There’s something calling to you?” A weird expression appeared on everyone’s face. That’s understandable; this is not a fantasy novel, so how could there be something calling out to me? Even I suspected that the mounting stress had caused me to develop auditory hallucinations.

“I believe you, Prince,” Lolidragon suddenly said excitedly.

“Really?” How touching, and here I actually thought that Lolidragon would be the first to say that I’ve lost my mind.

“Yes, when you were looking toward the Northern Continent earlier, you actually looked in the right direction! That is absolutely amazing, so there really must be something guiding you,” Lolidragon said eagerly, clenching her fists.

Hey...

“So who is willing to come with me tomorrow? I will not force you. It’s okay if you guys follow when all the preparations are ready,” I said while looking at everyone.

Everyone fell silent. *Are you serious? No one is willing to come with me? Then I really must reconsider going tomorrow.*

“Odd Squad will always act together!” Wolf-dàgē said after a while, and Yu Lian-dàsǎo gave me an encouraging smile.

In an unfriendly tone, Lolidragon said, “If you let me die for no reason, I swear I’ll chase you all the way back to your house and kill you.”

To my house? So you would like to come and see if my brother really is that handsome in real life while visiting my parents, your future parents-in-law, at the same time?

“Wherever his Highness goes, so too will Gui.” Gui bowed elaborately as usual.

Doll pounced on me, and giggling, with no hesitation on her face, she said, “I want to go with Prince-gēge.”

“I’ll go too,” Feng Wu Qing said lightly, simultaneously calling me a stupid sister through a private message.

“I’ll definitely follow you, for without you I wouldn’t even be here in Second Life.” As for the one who said that, of course it was Wicked, the Zhuo-gēge who’d always cared for me.

“We’re friends, so of course I’ll follow you.” As always, Nan Gong Zui went straight to point without any extra words.

“Let’s go, let’s go! The two of us want to see just how beautiful the Dictator of Life is!” Neurotic and DanDan laughed happily.

As for Winter Triumph, he could only shake his head helplessly while saying, “Although there’s no money to be earned and I may even lose money, the princess is going, so staying here instead of going to protect the Princess would be unacceptable.”

“Lolidragon, you are going? Then I’ll go too.” Everyone turned their heads in time to avoid Undying Man’s sparkling eyes attack.

“Fairsky and I will be going. We’re going to fight for ourselves!” Sunshine said, hugging Fairsky tightly. I could see the look of resolve and determination in his eyes, the total opposite of the laziness and naivety I had seen when I first met him... However, the Sunshine now was even more attractive.

“...”

How peculiar. Kenshin didn’t say anything, yet everyone needed only to look at him and a “...” appeared automatically in our heads. I guess this “...” probably means a silent agreement.

“I’ll go. It’s fine, so long as there are battles to fight,” the other “piece of ice,” Cold Fox, said. His eyes were filled with longing and passion for battle, definitely not for me.

I was filled with gratitude. I would never have thought that everyone would be willing to go with me. Wholeheartedly I said, “Thanks, really, thank you everyone.”

“What is there to thank us for? We are all friends,” Neurotic said as he tightly gripped my head, and vigorously ruffled and messed up my hair. I started laughing, ran away and gave DanDan a peck as revenge.

“Ah! You rascal, don’t you know that one should never mess around with his friend’s wife?” Neurotic rushed toward me and brushed me away.

I laughed, my heart filled with gratitude. *Regardless of whether it’s God, the Buddha, or Allah, whoever it was, thank you for letting me have such wonderful friends!*

Everyone messed and fooled around for quite a while before taking their leave one after another, until the ones left were the daughter of the company’s president, who had nothing better to do, and me, a slacking university student who had no lessons in the morning. After a minute, Lolidragon asked worriedly, “Do you think this whole thing about Celestial wanting you to head out as soon as possible is actually a trap?”

“I’m not sure.” I shrugged. “Anyway, the only way out now is to fight our way into the Northern Continent and defeat the Dictator of Life. That is a fact that even Gui cannot deny. And didn’t Gui mention that our every move is already known to the Dictator of Life? So it wouldn’t make much of a difference if we went now or later,” I said indifferently. I was also rather disturbed by what Celestial said to me the other day. I had a feeling that I would regret it if I didn’t listen to what Celestial said and get there immediately.

After a moment of silence Lolidragon finally asked, “Prince, do you still insist on having the ND attached to you?”

“Yes.” I nodded determinedly, having never once regretted the choice.

“Fine, because you’re the only one who can... If you’re the one to solve this, then I guess it’s fine,” Lolidragon said, with a slight hint of grief.

“What’s wrong?” I was really shocked. *Lolidragon could actually emit this aura called grief? How surprising; usually other than a perverted aura, the only other aura Lolidragon would have would be that of murderous intent.*

Feeling a little awkward, Lolidragon said, “I guess it would be alright to tell you this. The physical features of the Dictator of Life were actually decided by me, and were modeled after a real person.”

Ohohoho, modeled after a real person? Are you serious? There is someone that handsome in real life? I swallowed. “So where is that person? Bring him along and let me take a look at him someday?” I suggested.

“He escaped,” Lolidragon’s face darkened.

“Escaped?” *Did I hear that correctly? The Dictator of Life was designed using the face of an escaped criminal? That must have helped to achieve a rather effective raise in the public awareness of the Wanted List...*

“Yup. In fact, he is actually a key figure in the Second Life Company. It would not be an exaggeration to say that he is the father of Second Life.” Lolidragon seemed to convey this in a rather relaxed manner. However, I could clearly see that she was a little stiff, and there was a look of either love or hatred in her eyes. Then again, maybe both feelings were there.

“His name’s Long Dian. He is an excellent programmer. No, maybe I should put it this way: in the area of programming, if he were to say that he’s the second best, no one would dare claim to be number one. He single-handedly created Second Life, becoming a right hand man my father was most proud of. In my father’s company, he could get anyone or do anything he wanted.”

“Then why would he escape?” *Why would someone like that need to escape? Don’t tell me it’s to escape from the claws of Lolidragon?*

“Because he had secretly used Second Life to conduct illegal experiments.” Lolidragon’s face became very stern as she continued, “He made use of the company’s name and funds to recruit test subjects to conduct illegal human experiments on.”

“Use Second Life to conduct illegal experiments? Second Life is just a game, what experiments could possibly be carried out here?” I was a little confused. *At most a survey or a trial test could be conducted, right? Is there any need to escape just because of that?*

After remaining silent for a long, long time, Lolidragon finally said, “I have no idea why I’m telling you this... Maybe it’s due to my guilt, my remorse for those people. He first had those people play the game, temporarily taking the roles of NPC characters. Then he cut off their brain waves, trapping them in the game, and murdered their physical bodies.”

Murder? My eyes widened, “Why would he do that?”

“He wanted to see if a human could actually live in the game, hence obtaining eternal life,” Lolidragon answered, coldly.

I gasped. *Why do I always come across situations that would only occur in a science fiction movie?* Immediately I asked, “So what happened to those people? Are they really living in the game?”

With a slight sense of regret and resentment, Lolidragon sighed and said, “We initially thought that it would be impossible for the experiment to succeed as after those people died, the NPCs reverted back to their original state, with no signs of humanity at all. Even so, we dared not delete those NPCs. Who would ever have guessed that problems would start to arise after so long...”

It felt as though something snapped in my brain. *Don't tell me...* “Kenshin and Sunshine?” I asked softly.

Lolidragon nodded wearily. “Yes, both of them.”

“Oh my God!” I gasped. *So that's the truth! Both Kenshin and Sunshine were originally human. They are humans who are living inside the game!*

Could it be that the Dictator of Life whose blueprint was based on Long Dian is also...? I couldn't help but ask, “Is the Dictator of Life actually Long Dian?”

“I don't know.” Shaking her head, Lolidragon said bitterly, “There has not been a single piece of news from him since he escaped, so maybe he really is just living in the game now.”

“Yeah, it might just be that the Dictator of Life is actually him.” I smiled ambiguously. “So that's why. Lolidragon, you wanted me to go and finish off your ex-lover?”

Lolidragon blushed. “What ex-lover? There's nothing between me and him.”

I chuckled while protecting my head, to protect myself from getting beaten to death by the rarely embarrassed Lolidragon. However, I could not help but feel a little puzzled deep inside. *If that is the case, then why did Celestial say that the Dictator of Life is waiting for me? Even if he's waiting, shouldn't he be waiting for Lolidragon instead?*

“Are you really going to install the ND on yourself?” a voice suddenly cut in while I was fooling around with Lolidragon. I looked up and saw that it was Gui, and he wasn't smiling at all. I had never seen Gui give me such a cold expression before and could not help but feel a little anxious.

“Are you really going to install the ND on yourself?” Gui asked again. Fury could be seen in his eyes. Even his fists were clenched tightly. I was horrified and stared at this Gui, who was nothing like the Gui I knew.

“Eh, I think I’ll leave first,” Lolidragon swallowed, made a beeline for the exit, and ran off. *Traitor!*

“Answer me!” Furious, Gui charged up and grabbed my shoulders.

Looking at Gui’s bloodshot eyes, I could barely mutter a word due to fear. Did Gui eat something bad? He has never been so fierce to me before. I could not understand this change, and I was terrified.

“Yeah...” I finally managed to squeeze out.

“You’re going to disappear forever. You’re going to disappear forever, do you realize that?” Gui bellowed.

“I know.” I struggled free of Gui’s hands and protested, “But I must do this, for Kenshin, for Sunshine, and for the Dictator of Life!”

“Then what about me?” Gui suddenly shouted, “If you were to disappear, what would I do?”

I was stunned. *So this is what Gui was so angry about.*

“Have you never thought about me? Not even for a moment?” Gui’s eyes were filled with dismay. A teardrop slowly fell from his eye. I could not help but catch it in my hand. I stared at it, dazed. “Prince...” Gui suddenly hugged me tightly. Just when I felt that something was not right and was about to struggle out of his arms, he begged, “Don’t push me away! I know my strength is incomparable to yours, but please, please don’t push me away.”

Hearing Gui’s whimpering pleas, I really, really couldn’t bring myself to push him away. I could only stand there quietly, allowing him to hug me as he cried softly, letting his sobs wound my heart as memories of the past appeared before my eyes...

My beloved Highness, if you cannot remember Guiliastes’ name, then please call me by my nickname... Just call me Gui...

Prince is like a rose with thorns. If at first I had known about its thorns, then perhaps I would not have picked it up. However, I have already picked the rose up, smelled its fragrance and seen its beauty. If I put it down now, the suffering borne by my heart would be more painful than the pain of my bleeding hand, torn open by the thorns. Therefore, I cannot put it down.

No matter who you might be, I don’t mind. I firmly believe that who you are now is the true you, just as the person I am right now is the true me. Everything else is of no

importance – be it gender, appearance, or even the facades we assume in real life... None of those are important...

If my tears can be used in exchange for your smile, then it's more than worthwhile.

"I'm sorry, Gui, I've always broken your heart." I gently ran my hand over his long, silky hair. *Why am I always making this man cry? Shattering the heart of this man who's always been quietly watching over me?*

"I have never considered your feelings... I'm really sorry," I apologized sincerely, deciding that I would never, ever ignore him like that again.

"I don't care about anything else; as long as you don't leave me or ignore me, I will be fine." Gui's arms which were already hugging me tightly, tightened again, as if fearing that I would simply disappear.

"Don't worry, no matter how the situation turns out, I will never disappear from you, I promise." Holding up Gui's face, I gave him a light peck on his forehead before continuing, "If Prince was to disappear, I promise you that you will definitely meet the real me." *Even if there's no Second Life, I still had to attend Professor Gui's classes, right?*

"Prince..." Seeming like he had finally relaxed, Gui slowly let go of me. Looking a little regretful, he apologized, "I'm sorry Prince, I shouldn't have troubled you before your departure."

"I—" *I don't mind...* Before I could finish my sentence, the door suddenly burst open with a loud bang and two eavesdroppers tumbled in.

"I told you to pull the door tight. Look, now we can't eavesdrop anymore," Lolidragon, who was on top, roared angrily.

Unwilling to lose to Lolidragon, Feng Wu Qing, who was on the bottom, retorted, "It's because you kept pressing down on me! You need to lose some weight."

"What did you say? Are you saying that I'm fat?!" Lolidragon shouted with flames of fury shooting from her eyes.

I guess my brother's definitely dead meat this time. Didn't he know that there are three taboo things which you can never complain about when it comes to women? One: the looks. Just a single word, "ugly," and even if you buy her a diamond ring, a Porsche, and a bungalow afterward as an apology, she would still remember that word for life. Two: the figure. Similar results as the previous one. Three: her boyfriend. If you dare to look down on her boyfriend, then it means you're looking down on her standards, looking

down on her ability to get a boyfriend, looking down on her future long term food provider... But I digress. Anyway, my brother will probably die a painful death this time.

“Gui, let’s take our leave first,” I said calmly.

“But Lolidragon looks like she’s going to murder Wu Qing. Shouldn’t we stop them?” Gui looked worriedly at Lolidragon, who seemed to burn with fury.

“There’s no need to. They’re just showing their care, concern, and love for each other through fighting and scolding. Let’s not disturb them in their process of being lovey-dovey with each other,” I said as I pushed Gui’s back, propelling him out through the door.

And also, this might be the last time they’ll ever fight like this. Feeling a little depressed, I looked at them. *This time, we might not be revived again.*

“Prince,” Lolidragon suddenly called me.

I turned around, confused. “What?”

“I’ve let the programmers attach the ND program to your character already,” Lolidragon said, moving her foot away from my brother’s most vital part... The second most vital part in the game.

Installed on me already? How come I don’t feel any different?

“When you’re going to launch ND, just shout, ‘ND self-destruct program activate.’ After shouting that, a flash of white light will appear on you and that will indicate that it has been launched,” Lolidragon explained carefully.

Just as I was about to nod to show that I understood, Gui spoke. Coldly, he said, “Wouldn’t that be a little too obvious? The Dictator of Life would definitely find out that the ND program is on Prince.”

“You can shout it before you see the Dictator...” Lolidragon replied hesitantly.

“And why don’t you install the ND on everyone? Wouldn’t there be a greater chance of succeeding? If it’s only installed on Prince, and it just so happens he fails, wouldn’t everything be over then?” Gui pressed.

“Oh yeah. Lolidragon, do you want to install it on more people? It would be safer that way.” *Heaven knows if I will be able to finish off the god of Second Life. I think the chance of me actually achieving success is rather slim. For Kenshin and Sunshine’s sake, I think it would be safer for more people to be installed with ND.*

“Prince, don’t interrupt.” Gui’s unhappy face scared me a little as he said, “I won’t believe that in such a well-known gaming company, not a single person realized that it would be safer if more than one ND was installed.” Finally, Gui stopped beating around the bush and demanded, “What are you hiding?”

Lolidragon looked as though she wanted to say something, yet could not say a thing. Her apologetic eyes even tried to avoid mine. *Is Lolidragon really hiding something from me?*

“Lolidragon?” *I understand Lolidragon less and less now. Is there actually a need to hide something from me?*

Lolidragon sighed again. “Prince, can you promise me that, no matter what happens, you will definitely kill the Dictator of Life?”

“Are you talking nonsense?” I couldn’t understand her at all. If not for that, why would I be going to the Northern Continent tomorrow? For a field trip?

Lolidragon closed her eyes, as if confessing her sins to a priest. “Prince, I’ve kept a lot of things from you, but I promise, once everything is over, I will definitely tell you everything. As for now, I’m sorry! I can’t say anything.”

I was a little stunned. *Lolidragon has kept a lot of things from me? But... Why?*

Lolidragon opened her eyes, and went straight to the point, “All I can say is that only you can kill the Dictator of Life. That is why attaching the ND to others would be utterly useless.”

Only I...can kill the Dictator of Life? What does that mean?

“Rubbish, the Dictator can’t be killed by anyone!” a ferocious voice suddenly sounded from behind me, but this voice was not a familiar one. Just as I was about to turn around, I suddenly found myself in a situation similar to being sucked up by a super powerful vacuum cleaner. I couldn’t counter that force at all; I could only let myself be pulled into the air by this unknown person.

“Prince!” Gui, Lolidragon, and Wu Qing—who had been pretending to be dead on the floor—all started attacking the thing behind me. However, from their expressions I could tell that all their attacks were futile!

I struggled desperately, suspended in the air. It was as though a merciless and powerful hand was holding the back of my neck, and I could not break free no matter how hard I tried. In fact, I slowly started to feel a warm liquid trickle down the back of my neck...

“Damn it!” I unsheathed my Black Dao and with all my might swung it behind me. Before I managed to cut anything, another surge of energy flung me heavily into the wall and I collapsed onto the floor. It felt as if all my bones were going to break into pieces.

“Prince.” Gui ran toward me and helped me up. His exposed worries and concerns could be seen crystal clear in his eyes.

I looked up toward the uninvited guest. A wind-like person appeared before my eyes... They were translucent, floating in the air, with long clothes that fluttered in the wind. A name popped up in my mind—*Flowing Wind, one of the Four Heavenly Kings Celestial had mentioned!* I instinctively knew that this must be Flowing Wind.

“Just what is there in you that the Dictator of Life values so much?” After scrutinizing me, he said disdainfully, “So weak, yet you still dream of killing the Dictator of Life? What a joke.”

“You’re Flowing Wind?” I asked seriously as I stood.

Flowing Wind’s eyebrows rose. “That stupid Celestial told you? Where is he?”

“What’s your reason for coming to Infinite City?” I was shocked. *Didn’t Clay Child mention before leaving, that the other three Heavenly Kings hated Celestial? Don’t tell me Flowing Wind came for Celestial?*

“Humph, I will go anywhere I feel like! Do I need your permission?” Flowing Wind shouted discontentedly. While he was shouting, the wind got stronger. It was blowing so much that I could barely open my eyes. However, through my pride and anger I forced myself to keep them open. *This guy is so annoying. If I don’t beat the shit out of him then I can just forget about killing the Dictator of Life, because I might just die right here from vomiting too much blood due to my pent-up rage.*

“I can’t control where you feel like going,” I said coldly. “But since you’ve entered Infinite City, and it just so happens that I’m the Overlord of Infinite City, I will not put up with your impudent behavior.”

Flowing Wind was momentarily stunned, but burst into laughter soon afterward. He spoke while still laughing, “You? You won’t put up with my impudent behavior? Hahaha, can you even do anything to me? If it weren’t for the fact that the Dictator of Life forbids it, just I alone would be enough to kill you.”

What an annoying guy! My temple vein throbbed. Raising my Black Dao, I said coldly, “Try me!”

“Come.” Flowing Wind snorted as he curled his finger, goading me.

Far too annoying! Just as I raised my Black Dao, I immediately felt the wind around me picking up speed. *Humph, trying to stop me with wind? Don't you know that wind aids in the spreading of a fire?* In a split second, I ducked and made a slide for Flowing Wind. Looking surprised, Flowing Wind immediately turned the wind into a whirlwind, surrounding and protecting himself. *Excellent opportunity!*

“Inferno Slash!” Engulfing my Black Dao with flame, I followed the direction of the wind and sent slash after slash into it. Just as I had expected, the wind picked up the flames, turning the whirlwind around Flowing Wind into a mini tornado of flames. Shocked, Flowing Wind immediately stopped the wind to avoid being burnt by the fiery tornado, without knowing that this was exactly what I was waiting for. *Without the protection of wind, let's see if you are still that tough.*

Seizing the opportunity, I shouted “Dragon Whirlwind Strike!” I slashed toward Flowing Wind like a spinning top. This is a move where even if it misses, it can still cause harm to the opponent.

“Eh!” Flowing Wind immediately dodged back, avoiding the deadly move, and then stared furiously at the bright red blood stain on his shoulder. But of course I couldn't be happier; just one move and he was severely wounded... All right, I admit the damage Flowing Wind had suffered was just a tiny graze. But at least there's blood. I've finally taken revenge for having been thrown into the wall by him.

“You!” Flowing Wind's eyes gradually turned from blue to blood red. The turbulent wind around us raged even more, causing me pain as it whipped against me. Looking down, I could see numerous red graze marks appearing on any exposed skin not covered with armor.

I smiled warily. *It seems that I've really gone and angered Flowing Wind now... He is one of the Four Heavenly Kings under the Dictator of Life; can I really beat him?*

“Supersonic Soul-chasing Arrow!”

A translucent arrow suddenly grazed Flowing Wind's face and a trickle of blood ran down his cheek. Seeing how stunned he looked, I couldn't help but laugh.

“Well done, Gui,” I said as I laughed. I had not expected Gui to make such a sudden attack, causing this member of the Four Heavenly Kings to experience humiliation yet again.

“Despicable humans!” Flowing Wind howled and suddenly disappeared.

Where is he? I stood stunned.

“Gui!” Lolidragon suddenly screamed. My heart skipped a beat and I instantly spun around—

A heart covered in blood suddenly appeared in Flowing Wind’s initially empty hand, and a ragged, bloody hole appeared in Gui’s chest...

“Gui!”

Extra Chapter: Life In Search of a Future

– translated by nausicaä

Kenshin

“I’m a comrade.” A man with red hair suddenly appeared, floating in midair as Kenshin was taking one of his rare, solitary retreats in the forest.

“Comrade?” asked Kenshin in his usual reserved manner. Nevertheless, he felt something stir inside him. *Could this person be like he was, an NPC with self-awareness?*

“Yes, I’m like you, a self-aware NPC.”

“Name?” Kenshin asked with characteristic brusqueness.

“Dictator of Life,” the man replied. He didn’t seem to mind Kenshin’s curt questioning.

“Dictator of Life,” Kenshin repeated carefully. He raised his head to face this comrade and said, “I’m Kenshin, and there’s another comrade called Sunshine.”

“I know,” said the Dictator of Life with a kind smile as he landed to sit beside Kenshin. The latter said nothing, and remained lying down next to the Dictator of Life.

“Do you want to go to the Northern Continent? We have many comrades there,” the Dictator of Life said after some time. “What’s more, after a while, there will be no more humans there to disturb us, and you will no longer have to conceal your identity as an NPC.”

“What do you mean?” asked Kenshin, his mind now full of questions. *How could there not be any humans in the Northern Continent?*

“I am in the process of eliminating the humans of the Northern Continent, so before long there shouldn’t be any people left,” the Dictator of Life said calmly.

Kenshin, who was originally lying on the grass, suddenly sat up. “You’re going to eliminate the humans of the Northern Continent?”

The Dictator of Life gave a faint smile and replied, “More accurately speaking, all the humans of *Second Life*.”

Kenshin was so shocked he was unable to speak. *Eliminate all the humans of Second Life?* The idea was simply insane.

“Could it be that you’re not dissatisfied living as the humans’ pet?” asked the Dictator of Life in a measured tone, ignoring Kenshin’s astonishment. “With your master constantly ordering you around to do his bidding, have you never wondered why you had to obey him? Don’t you feel resentful at always having to hide your identity as an NPC?”

The sudden barrage of questions rendered Kenshin temporarily speechless. Did being Prince’s pet make him feel dissatisfied? He was actually okay with it; after all, he had never had to call anyone “master.” Though, Prince always stole his tea, which did leave him feeling rather resentful.

He couldn’t deny the fact that Prince was always ordering him around either. It was true that whenever Prince got himself into a particularly sticky situation, he always called Kenshin in to clean up the mess. For instance, there was that incident with Celestial... Although, Prince nearly sacrificed himself for him in the end. And then there was the case involving Cold Fox, but as a result of that, he had found someone to drink tea with, which wasn’t bad, especially since this new companion was very quiet and therefore infinitely better than the loud-mouthed Prince.

As for the issue of him having to conceal his identity as an NPC... Perhaps this did make him feel rather bitter and afraid of approaching humans. After all, he didn’t have the courage Sunshine had to fall in love with a person.

“Come join the ranks of your allies in the Northern Continent, and together let us truly turn *Second Life* into our world,” said the Dictator of Life, his face turning grim.

“There’s nothing really bad about the way things are now,” Kenshin responded with some hesitation.

“Do you know what will happen if it’s discovered that you have self-awareness?” the Dictator of Life pressed relentlessly.

Kenshin’s heart suddenly missed a beat. If he was found out...it would definitely be the end for him. Even Prince wouldn’t be able to save him then.

“Are you not even a little resentful of these humans who are free to slaughter us as they please? Would you rather continue on in this foolish manner, until the humans discover your secret and then destroy you?” the Dictator of Life asked again, continuing his ruthless onslaught.

Kenshin had no words to fight back with. *Perhaps, he thought, his destruction was precisely what he was expecting, and he was simply waiting to experience the same fate as Kaoru.*

“Don’t you wish to rebel against the humans who brought about the tragic fate of Kaoru and yourself?” questioned the Dictator of Life, finally throwing down his trump card, which was also the only thing Kenshin cared about.

“Kaoru...” Kenshin felt a dull, throbbing pain in his heart. Even...even though he knew that everything between him and Kaoru wasn’t real, even though it was possible that Kaoru was just a compliant NPC, he could never forget about her.

“Join us!”

Kaoru isn’t some object to be used! Suddenly angered, Kenshin roared, “Don’t use Kaoru to tempt me, and don’t ever let me hear her name come out of your mouth again!”

“Is that so?” The Dictator of Life silently and slowly ascended into the sky. “You are welcome to join us anytime. You need only to call out to me in your mind, and your comrades will welcome you.”

The Dictator of Life! Kenshin watched as the figure slowly evaporated. He felt a growing sense of agitation within himself, gradually spreading until the instant right before the Dictator of Life disappeared. He felt an urge to call out and stop him, this man who, besides Sunshine, was the only comrade he had.

“Kenshin!” Cold Fox’s voice drifted in from somewhere behind him. “There’s trouble in the city, let’s go back together.”

“Alright.” Without another word, Kenshin followed Cold Fox, but he couldn’t help looking back at the spot where the Dictator of Life had disappeared.



Celestial

Very rarely did players appear in his home. But when those four players appeared, they even walked straight into the spot that lay precisely beneath the magic portal. As such, in accordance with the rules, he himself had to appear and go deal with them personally.

That round girl is so cute! The thought suddenly popped into Celestial’s head. *That round, powdery face, round hair buns, round eyes, how could everything be so round?* Celestial could barely keep himself from smiling.

Alright, I’ll have this girl stay here to keep me company! Celestial decided, and immediately proceeded to act.

“How about being my wife? Stay here with me.” Having just captured the girl, Celestial wasted no time in presenting his request, and at the same time, he was unable to resist

rubbing his face against this cute girl's cheek. *So smooth and soft*, he thought. *It feels really good!*

"Don't be ridiculous!" Despite being afraid at first, the girl looked as though she couldn't stand him anymore, and viciously swatted Celestial twice with her right hand.

"What are you doing?" Although he had been hit twice, Celestial only felt a light stinging in his cheeks. There wasn't much strength behind the blows. On the whole, he found it all rather amusing. "Try doing it again!"

The girl almost—no, she really got mad. Abandoning all reason, she opened her mouth and sunk her teeth into Celestial's arm.

"Are you hungry?" Celestial asked curiously. *His wife was actually so hungry that she was eating him!*

Three dark lines dropped down the girl's face. She opened her mouth and dejectedly said, "Just hurry up and kill me; I still need to return to the city and find Prince-gēgē."

"I'm not going to kill you. I want you to be my wife," Celestial said with a smile.

The girl opened her eyes wide and asked, "Do you even know what 'wife' means?"

"Of course I know," Celestial responded in a matter-of-fact tone. "It means a person who will always be with me."

Well, that's not exactly wrong either, the girl grudgingly admitted. "Don't you have a lot of purple-robed nymphs to keep you company?" she insisted.

"Purple-robed nymphs? You mean this?" Celestial summoned a purple-robed nymph out of thin air.

The girl nodded her head frantically.

"This is also a part of me, and I control it," said Celestial in a somewhat aggrieved tone. "Being by myself is so boring, how about you keep me company?"

Ugh, she thought. *Even though Celestial seemed pitiable, she couldn't really stay there with him, and yet he refused to kill her. Sob! And she couldn't ask Prince-gēgē to come save her or he'd be killed by Celestial. Oh well, she would go offline now and return tomorrow to think of some solution.*

Go offline... The girl's face turned pale. "Why can't I go offline?"

“What’s ‘go offline’?” inquired a curious Celestial as he squatted down in front of the girl.

“It means to leave this game,” replied the girl, ashen-faced as she struggled to go offline. It was no use. Panicking, she hurriedly PMed Prince, but in her distress she failed to notice the change that had come over Celestial’s expression.

“Leave...the game? What’s a game?” A strange feeling began to weave its way into Celestial’s consciousness.

“This! This is a game; I’m a player, and you’re an NPC, so I can’t be your wife.” The girl, upset that she could not go offline, could only shout in reply.

“What’s an NPC?” Celestial asked confusedly as a most peculiar feeling stirred within the depths of his heart.

Prince-gēgē said he was going to bring people to come and save her. The girl finally calmed down and replied, “The characters besides the players.”

“Then what’s a player?” asked Celestial, feeling even more perplexed. *Why couldn’t he understand anything she said?*

Although she thought it was weird for this boss to have so many questions, the girl still answered each one in detail, including the matters concerning the game, such as players and NPCs.

“I...I will think about this carefully,” said Celestial as he walked out in a flustered manner. Suddenly he turned to say, “I will leave a doppelganger to keep you company. This way you won’t be bored.”

My wife and I are different? And because we’re different, we can’t be together? As he stood there thinking, Celestial felt a stab of anguish in his heart.

“Return Doll now!” an icy voice demanded.

Celestial glared at his wife’s companions. *They were the same as his wife, so they could be with her, yet he could not?* he thought angrily. *No, he wanted to be together with his wife. He wouldn’t give her up, even if he died!*



Dictator of Life

“Dictator, the mission to assassinate the overlord of Central Continent has failed,” said a black-clad female assassin in an icy tone.

Another identical voice sounded, this time from the mouth of another, identical female assassin who was also clothed entirely in black. “Dictator, the mission to assassinate the overlord of Eastern Continent has failed.”

“Dictator, the mission to assassinate the overlord of Western Continent has failed.”

“Dictator, the mission to assassinate the overlord of Southern Continent has failed.”

“Dictator, the mission to assassinate the overlord of Northern Continent has succeeded.”

“Only one success?” asked the Dictator of Life, whose long hair was the exact color of blood, as he listened to the female assassins’ reports. His face, which did not betray any hint of surprise, only showed the usual distant, plaintive expression. He even breathed a sigh of relief. *That person is still alive*, he thought. Besides, rather than the failed missions, what he really detested was the identical manner in which all the assassins responded!

“You couldn’t even take care of the overlord of Central Continent? That brat is so weak,” sneered Celestial, whose beautiful face wore a look of disdain. “That’s why I kept telling you to give me the mission, but you wouldn’t listen!”

“No, you can’t go,” said the Dictator of Life.

“Why? Are you saying I’m inferior to those assassins?” Celestial demanded heatedly, his face contorted into an ugly expression.

“No, it’s just that they are much more obedient than you. At the very least, they won’t sneak off to visit their ‘wife.’”

Celestial’s face flushed and he quibbled, “What’s wrong with me visiting my wife?”

“Everything. They’re humans.”

Upon hearing the voice that spoke, the Dictator of Life knew almost immediately to whom it belonged. Actually, he did not so much recognize the owner from the voice as he had been informed of this newcomer’s arrival via the computer program. “Scorching Flame of the Four Heavenly Kings.”

“Celestial, are you kicking up a fuss again?!” bellowed the unicorn, whose entire body was cloaked in flames. In a flash, he appeared at Celestial’s side and began to shoot raging flames from his mouth.

Greatly startled, Celestial promptly used Celestial Satin to block the attack, but being made out of cloth, it had already begun to emit a burning smell. When the fire pouring out of Scorching Flame’s mouth showed no signs of lessening, Celestial muttered a spell

and dozens of purple-robed nymphs appeared out of nowhere and immediately rushed forward to attack Scorching Flame.

“Stop!” The Dictator of Life used both hands to seize the air, causing Celestial and Scorching Flame’s attacks to disappear completely. The two found themselves suspended in mid-air and struggled in vain against unseen bonds, appearing as though they were being held captive by invisible hands. The two looked frantically at the Dictator of Life, fully aware that they had angered the god of Second Life.

“Am I invisible to you?” the Dictator of Life asked, his wrath strongly provoked. He had previously laid down the law, promising anyone who dared harm or kill a fellow self-aware companion a most harsh and painful fate. Yet now, in his very presence, Celestial and Scorching Flame dared to attack each other!

Teary-eyed, Celestial whimpered, “He started it.”

“Scorching Flame, attacking your companions is strictly forbidden,” the Dictator of Life rebuked the unicorn, taking care to emphasize every word.

Scorching Flame lowered his head and answered, “It won’t happen again.”

The Dictator of Life let out a sigh of regret, and then released the two. “Celestial, didn’t I already make an identical wife for you?”

Celestial gave a snort and then, not seeming to care whether anyone heard him, grumbled, “I hate that fake. I want my real wife.”

“She is exactly the same as your wife,” said the Dictator of Life, looking at Celestial with some surprise. As far as he knew, Celestial and his professed “wife” hadn’t known each other for long. He had assumed that Celestial only took a fancy to her because she was the first girl he happened to lay his eyes on.

“No she’s not. Except for the looks, they’re completely different... No, even the looks are different. My wife doesn’t have such a fake smile,” Celestial said with a darkening expression. *That doll that looked like his wife was definitely not her!*

“Is that so?” The Dictator of Life sighed inwardly. *Was it no good after all?*

“I’m going to go find my wife,” Celestial announced even as he moved toward the door.

“You will be killed, and even if you’re reborn you will lose self-awareness,” the Dictator of Life said with consternation. He had risked the danger of being discovered by the humans in order to save Celestial, yet now the ungrateful fool was going off to get himself killed? The thought displeased him greatly.

“I don’t care!” yelled Celestial as he turned around. “I only want to see my wife!”

Incensed, the Dictator of Life waved his hand through the air, causing Celestial’s body to slide before him. Stressing each syllable, the Dictator of Life snarled, “If you’re going to get yourself killed by humans, then I might as well finish you off myself!”

“Don’t kill me,” Celestial begged with a frightened expression.

Upon seeing Celestial’s expression, the Dictator of Life relented. It wasn’t that he really wanted to kill Celestial. There already weren’t enough companions. How could he afford to kill a single one? Furthermore, he himself had established the rule forbidding the others from killing each other.

“I don’t want to die, I haven’t even seen my wife yet,” said Celestial, his desolate face full of pleading.

The Dictator of Life sighed. Why was Celestial so partial to that girl? In the days following that incident he had found himself helpless against Celestial’s obsession with his wife. He had explained to Celestial the truth about this world, about the humans who subjected them to such a tragic fate, and told him they had to rebel... Yet nothing, nothing, could compare to his wife, that little girl who the Dictator of Life judged to be nothing but ordinary.

And yet he did not blame Celestial in the least, but rather felt his actions were very, very familiar...

“Dictator of Life, change that girl into a boy,” came the instructions from above. Normally, this was not allowed.

However, he understood that he was not allowed to ask why. He merely silently changed that girl’s gender in the game; however, he could not stop himself from curiously observing her. *Why does she want to become a guy?*

He always silently observed her. She was truly amusing. As he watched her, he would always find himself changing the expression on his face without being able to help it. According to the humans’ explanation, this kind of expression was a smile, an expression that shows up when one is happy...

Even though he kept telling himself that she was a human and that he hated humans the most, the humans that had created him and were still controlling him, he could not stop himself from watching her. How ridiculous was this? Humans controlled him, and he could not control himself?

She had finally reached level ten. When the system was about to send her a weapon, he couldn't stop himself from intervening. He changed his own weapon into a growing-type and gave it to her. Now he could think of himself as accompanying her at her side, right?

When she gained a pet egg, he couldn't help but wrinkle his brow. That wolf that was about to be born would drool saliva that she hated the most. This pet did not suit her. He'd exchange a new one for her. What should he change it to? Right, she loves to eat meatbuns. If he changed this to a meatbun, she should like it, right?

"It's almost Prince's birthday. What kind of present should we buy for Prince?" When her companions mumbled to themselves on the streets, he found out that it was almost her birthday. He recalled that it was human custom to give presents when it was someone's birthday. Then, should he also give a gift to her?

He transformed into a player. Just when her companions passed by his side, he opened his mouth to say, "Selling tiaras..."

In order not to cast suspicion on himself, he even purposely haggled over the price with her companions for a long while before letting them buy the tiara. Once she wore it, he found that it suited her. It truly suited her.

When she foolishly took a boat that was headed toward the Eastern Continent and heartbrokenly wanted to return home, he once again helped her out, allowing the prophet to hint at the next prophet's location, and he even chose something she was an expert at as the test, allowing her to throw the dice, always winning her throws...

Although, he unexpectedly discovered that there were two comrades in the Eastern Continent who were sentient... That was just the start of his discovery that something was not quite right. He discovered that there was something wrong with the program. It seemed that someone other than him was controlling Second Life, and that person was continuously raising the intelligence of BOSS characters. How could this be? He was supposed to be the only person who could do so.

He began a series of battles with that person, doing his utmost to prevent that person from infiltrating Second Life; however, that person seemed to understand Second Life even better than he did. All of his efforts amounted to nothing. He wanted to report this matter to the humans, but he discovered that he could no longer contact the humans. He had fallen into a predicament...

Later on, that person slowly began controlling his actions, slowly controlling him... For the first time, he wished he was not a program; not something that could be changed, not a program that could be controlled.

Chase all of the humans out of Second Life—No! I don't want to chase her away!

Chase all of them away! All humans should die—No...I like...her...

“Come kill me, Prince. Come kill me,” the Dictator of Life murmured to himself. “I cannot hold on much longer.”