

All R. Artist 58

Chapter 58: All Dead

Chu Kuang released a short story?

This push notification was greeted by many fans with the same first reaction

Did Chu Kuang post an extra chapter of “King of the Net” on the Tribe?

This assumption was reasonable.

Some authors liked to use the Tribe platform to publish free additional content which they never intended to formally publish, as a form of interaction with their readers.

However, Chu Kuang was clearly not one who enjoyed interacting with his fans.

When everyone followed the Tribe notification link, they found out that this was not an extra chapter at all. It was merely a mini novel written by Chu Kuang.

“I wish it was an extra chapter of ‘King of the Net’.”

By this time, “King of the Net” had already released its second volume and garnered a considerable fan base. Many were disappointed to find out that it was not an additional chapter.

For instance, Zhu Ming, a high school student from Mountain City in Qin Continent, was a staunch fan of the “King of the Net” novel.

“You should read more nutritious books.”

Zhu Ming’s sister, Zhu Hui, always opposed her brother reading youth fantasy novels and seized opportunities to reproach him for it.

Zhu Hui had a prejudice against youth fantasy novels.

Because she had once read books of this genre where the protagonist travelled to a different world, surrounded by beautiful girls, all of whom eventually became his wives. The narrative even sporadically contained adult content...

“I’ve told you,”

Zhu Ming rebutted Zhu Hui: “‘King of the Net’ is different from those novels. It’s about tennis, and many professionals say it is well-written. A lot of girls also like this novel.”

“Really?”

Zhu Hui was skeptical.

She simply sat down in front of the computer where her brother’s Tribe account was logged in. “You just said Chu Kuang has just posted a short story, right? This is the author you like so much, right? Let’s see what he’s written.” “This short story is not a youth fantasy novel.”

“As long as it’s written by the same person, it’s fine.”

“Then you can read ‘King of the Net.’ I have the hard copy.”

“No need for the trouble. Sometimes, one can understand a person through their writing.” Saying that, Zhu Hui nonchalantly opened the short story titled “Artificial Beauty” and started to read.

The story was indeed short.

The story started by narrating how a bar owner, seeing his bar on the verge of closure, gambled everything on manufacturing a beautiful female robot who could keep customers company while they drank. As the robot was crucial to the fate of the bar, the owner took great pains to ensure she was incredibly beautiful and attractive.

Her complexion, whiter than any young girl’s, was completely realistic.

Those who didn't know the truth would definitely think she had the most delicate skin among all the women they had ever seen!

Patrons, seeing a young, beautiful woman behind the counter, would rush to greet and chat with her.

When asked about her name and age, she was able to answer with an unperturbed smile. However, when asked anything further, she would be at a loss for words—

Even so, no one detected that she was a robot.

Thus, the bar started buzzing.

More and more patrons came to the bar to drink with the beauty.

The bar owner stood behind the counter, and occasionally bent down to recycle the alcohol from the plastic tube under the female robot and resell it to the patrons fairly.

The patrons did not discover this secret.

[The patrons thought: "Such a young lady, yet she can drink like a fish. Her body must be very healthy. She doesn't coquettishly cling to anyone after getting drunk. When patrons invite her for a drink, she'll always drink it all at once and yet show no signs of drunkenness.]

That's what the patrons thought.

Sitting in front of the computer, Zhu Hui was somewhat surprised.

Chu Kuang's imaginative prowess was indeed quite interesting.

The text seemed to carry a hint of irony—people were so focused on appearance that they missed the substance, which was why they were so captivated by a beautiful robot, completely lacking in their own judgement. But where was the story heading?

As this thought appeared, Zhu Hui saw the following text:

[Among the customers was a young man who fell in love with the beautiful robot lady at first sight. He would visit the bar every day, inviting the robot lady for drinks. Regardless of how courteously he treated Ms. Buick, it was all in vain. But he didn't give up, instead he pursued Ms. Buick even more enthusiastically, only ordering the most expensive wines in the bar and spent all his savings.]

This part too was laced with irony.

It even felt oddly realistic.

The young man who fell in love at first sight with the robot lady, was eerily similar to some of those pitiful creatures who would rather continue to eat ramen noodles as long as they could tip their broadcasters.

Yet the storyline was difficult to guess.

Could it be that the robot will develop human emotions?

If so, Zhu Hui would feel greatly disappointed.

Because that's too cliched.

She continued reading with expectation: [Finally, unable to pay the drinking bill, the young man had to bring out all the money from his home. His father was furious and warned sternly: Do not go to that damned place ever again! Take this money to settle the debts, remember, this is the last time!]

The last time.

The young man came to the bar with the money. To mark his last visit, he raised many toasts, inviting the robot lady to drink a lot.

He confessed his feelings once again.

But the robot's brain was empty, like an empty can. The beauty, who looked good but was hollow inside, responded with her pre-set speech program.

The young man didn't get the answer he wanted.

[He quietly took out a terrible poison from his pocket, sprinkled it in the wine glass, filled it, and served it to the robot lady. He watched with his own eyes as the robot lady drained the poisoned wine.]

"That's so brutal, isn't it?"

Zhu Hui, in front of the computer, suddenly felt an uncomfortable thumping in her heart. The extreme move by the young man – to kill the one he couldn't have. Luckily, Ms. Buick was a robot, else she could have been poisoned to death.

That was what Zhu Hui thought.

But the next paragraph left her with chills running down her spine:

[After the young man left, the barkeep called out to the remaining customers: From now on, the drinks are on me. Everyone, drink to your heart's content!

Even though he was treating everyone, the barkeep wasn't going to lose out. Because at this late hour, no new customers would be coming in; moreover, all he was serving was the drink recycled from Ms. Buick's foot pipe, there was no need to spend any money.]

Ah!

Almost forgotten!

All the drinks Ms. Buick drank were recycled by the barkeep to be sold to other customers. That means everyone in the bar today drank the deadly poisoned wine!

Zhu Hui was suddenly taken aback.

The short story was now at its end, the final part read like this:

[The customers and the bar's staff were engaged in high-spirited noisemaking. Everyone was toasting each other, drinking heartily. Even the barkeep, influenced by the atmosphere, raised his glass from behind the counter, slowly drinking it.]

All the descriptions stopped abruptly here.

But one didn't need to imagine what happened next. This was the author's intentional ambiguity. It made the story more impactful!

"They're all dead."

The ending was completely unexpected for Zhu Hui, startling her so much she blurted out: "They're all dead!"

"What?"

Her brother beside her asked, a little puzzled.

Zhu Hui didn't answer. She first logged into her tribe account and followed Chu Kuang, and then said:

"Chu Kuang is a talented writer, his novel... should be worth reading.."