

Chapter 1: Brand New Life Online

"Elena, come pick up your lunchbox, dear."

I had just finished cooking my dear daughter's lunch, and tightly packed it all in her favorite lunchbox. My radiant daughter swiftly moved towards the table and grabbed the lunchbox and saved it inside of her bag.

Her beautiful aquamarine eyes and long, silky black hair seemed as radiant as ever. However her face seemed also as... expressionless as ever.

"Take care now, dear. Give mommy a kiss," I said. I quickly approached her and gave her a small kiss on her cheek. She looked at me expressionlessly and nodded as if the kiss didn't even register on her mind.

"I am going to spend the rest of the day in Anna's place," She said.

"Eh? But weren't we going to spend the evening binge watching your favorite series? It is about Marvel! You like that stuff, right?" I asked.

Elena, however, ignored me, as she walked outside the house and closed the door, she rushed to high school as always.

I sighed softly.

Why does she have to be so uncommunicative with her mother?

She could have told me this beforehand instead of the last day.

I had been planning to watch that series with her all this time and was truly looking forward to it. I even watched those previous boring superhero movies just for her so I could understand what it was that she liked about them.

I rubbed my forehead for a moment. "Ugh... that didn't go too well at all."

Why did it just have to be so difficult to talk with my own daughter?. Why does she have to be so silent and intimidating with her expressionless face? Even as her mother, I get second thoughts when greeted with such a look on her face. I don't want to make her mad so I end up not bringing things up that might cause distaste on her.

I leaned against the kitchen's counter for the moment and smiled sadly.

I just wanted to spend some time with my daughter but she keeps within arm's reach.

It had already been... five years since my dear husband passed away, and since then, I've been a widow.

And in that span of time, my daughter had also changed a lot. She's almost unrecognizable from my bright and beautiful daughter.

I know that it is hard for her. It was very hard for me... and it's still hard for me. There is not a single day I don't think about my husband.

But it has already been five years, and I am sure that my dear would have wanted us to continue living our lives... I had, mostly. It was very hard, but my mother and my friends helped me get through it.

I've been trying to do the same for my dear little Elena ever since then, but she never wanted to receive my help, even when I tried my hardest.

But it all ended between the two of us almost a year ago when we had a big discussion. It all happened because I wanted her to spend new year's with my family back then, she was also part of the family, but she didn't like them.

Elena disliked spending time with her grandmother and her aunts and ended up running away from home.

I was so worried and even approached the cops back then for help, and yet they even rebuffed me when I explained the situation. Somehow it made sense to them that my daughter would run away! They made me think that I was a terrible mother but then Elena eventually came back the other day.

She came back home exhausted and shut herself in her room to play that VRMMO game that was popular nowadays.

I bought her that for her birthday the previous year, but now I've begun to regret it. She doesn't do anything else other than play that thing or go meet her friend and continue playing that same game in her house.

I shook my head and let out a breath. "Hahh..."

It made perfect sense that ranting won't help me get over this trouble in the end. However, it did feel good to express my worries a little. But it didn't change a thing, I needed to try somehow to connect with her again.

Perhaps I should ask Rita, my friend? She's coming today before lunch to ask for advice., At the moment, she's currently preoccupied with her little kid, so she always comes here to ask me for tips on how to raise her baby.

Her little Emilio is very cute. Whenever I see him, I am reminded of how Elena used to be like. My little princess back then was just a tiny little baby that constantly peed her diapers and now she was all grown up.

"Ah, it would be so much easier if she was still a child." I sighed. Back then, Elena adored both me and her father. "I hope Rita has some good ideas."

I sat down over the couch to rest and I looked into the TV news.

I scrunched up my nose when I saw what was playing. "Come on, does it have to be this commercial every damn time?" I grumbled and eyed the ever-familiar of this accursed game that took over my daughter's life.

There was a vast sky which showed several characters fighting against one another. One of them was a beautiful blonde-haired woman currently equipped in white armor and had feathered angelic-like wings. In this commercial, she battled against a blue-skinned and horned guy wearing a black cape. The two were blasting one another with magic-like effects...

After that, the scenery changed to many other players who were now playing around. Countless events and images then popped up to entice the watchers, it especially highlighted items and other things that this game featured...

"VRMMO, Virtual Reality Massive Multiplayer Online, New Life Online has launched its fifth update!"

"New content has been added! New Classes have been added to the game, and there is now a new continent to explore!"

"Defeat the Demon King and save the world of New Life Online now!"

"Game available in all game stores, now!"

"Live the life you've always wanted to live!"

"New Events for every player."

"There is always a unique story for every player to live!"

"Shape your world to your liking, and meet new NPC made with the latest Artificial Intelligence technology!"

"New World Boss is approaching, this march!"

"What are you waiting for? Come play, and live a new life!"

...

The long finally ended and I sighed a little. I can tell why people were so obsessed with this new game, it was new technology after all, it had been in development for years by Nexus Corps, a large multi-billionaire enterprise that expanded all over the world.

They began the virtual reality boom and are still holding it within their grasp as the company that was profiting the most out of such a technology.

In my general understanding of how this all worked, these games needed you to submerge your consciousness into a virtual world, and then you were free to live a completely new life there, apparently.

I don't know how it all works... personally, I cannot really believe it as it is. It seemed too good to be true, but all the kids love it.

And among them was my little Elena who is absolutely obsessed with this stupid game.

I had been thinking about taking away her console but... she'd probably get mad at me.

The last thing I wanted was for her to get angry at me. We've already gone through so much and didn't need another thing to strain our relationship. I don't want to imagine what she'd do if I took the thing she loved away.

Sigh. I buried my face in my hands for a moment and tried to erase the doubts of my daughter running away and never coming again. While I was lost in my thoughts, however, an all too familiar sound interrupted me.

Knock, knock.

The front door was being knocked. I immediately raised my head and smiled a little.

"It must be Rita!"

"!"

"I am coming! Wait up!"

I opened the door and was welcomed with the sight of a gorgeous brown-haired woman in her late 30's who then greeted me. She was my goofy friend Rita and we've been friends since high school.

I couldn't help but smile back at her, she was my dear friend after all, she always knew how to brighten up my life. I was incredibly grateful for her being a constant presence all these years. When my husband passed away, she was always there to hug me back and tell me that everything would be alright.

Without her, I don't know if I would have been able to recover as much.

And in her arms she carried her cute little baby. This black-haired boy was no other than Emilio.

"Auntie!" he said cutely.

At the age of three he was already able to speak quite well.

"Welcome dear! And hello, little Emilio! How are you doing?" I asked, as I petted the little baby.

"Guud!" he said cutely.

So cute... He was really a beautiful child.

Rita quickly walked inside my house and sat down on the couch at my side. I went to quickly make her a cup of tea and brought in some cookies as well.

"Elayne, you won't believe what I brought to you today," Rita said.

"Eh? What? Did you bring another of those makeups you want me to purchase from you? I've already bought you a lot!" I called out to her from the kitchen .

"N-No! Not that! This is actually a gift!" she said.

"Eh? Gift?" I asked in shock, but quickly brought out the drink and cookies I prepared beforehand.

Once I was done serving them, she quickly drank a bit of the tea and then ate a cookie. Her little Emilio soon took over and began to snack on the rest of the cookies on the side.

"Ah, cookies first, huh?" I chuckled.

"Mmph, you always bake the best ones, Elayne." Rita grinned once she finished her snack but then turned over to get the present she had for me. "Look."

Rita opened a bag she brought with herself, and soon a beautiful dark box came out.

I blinked and looked at it. Was it... a game console? No, wait.

"A VR headset?!" I exclaimed.

"And the latest!" she said.

"W-Where did you even get that?" I asked.

"I got another one back home! I won a supermarket contest, and the prize was two of these plus two of this popular game... So because I know my friend is trying to connect with her daughter... I brought one for you, for free! So you can play it and be with your little girl inside the game," Rita said.

Her intentions were nice, but this was a bit... too much. These things were very expensive, it cost me my whole savings to afford one for Elena back then.

As a widow, the money I had was limited to what my dear had saved back then. So it meant that money was a little tight. I worked g at a nearby

convenience store and also took in other side jobs but that wasn't even enough... My mother was also helping me by pitching in with the rent.

So these things were way too expensive for me!

"You're crazy! I am not going to accept that! You could be in a better spot if you sell it off Ebay and earn a good chunk of money." I said.

"I am not selling anything, I heard that you can make money off selling game items and game currency, so I will begin playing the game too in a week from now!" she said while giggling. There was a bright look on her face. "It might also help you earn some extra money, Elayne."

"Seriously..." I sighed.

"Come on, think about it, dear." She said and left it over the table.

"Sigh... Now you're just pressuring me to play it!" I said.

"Haha, it is pretty easy to play! I already tried it out... My older son is also playing it so I will join his guild later!" said Rita.

"R-Really? Guild? There are such things?" I asked.

"My son said that there is EVERYTHING! In that game! He even said he got a party of cute NPC girls he calls his harem... or something," said Rita.

"Weird..." I said.

I looked into the box in front of me, as I thought about what to do.

At the end, the day passed as usual, Rita spent most of the day with me but had to leave to make dinner for her son.

Elena was not coming today any time soon, and I was done with everything in the house. I stared at the gift that Rita left for me and I bit down on my lip.

I guess... I could try it out?

Damn Rita, she was really lucky, wasn't she?

"Geez. I'll give in to her." I brought the box to my room and sat down over my bed.

I quickly unpacked everything and followed the guide.

Once everything was finished I then put on the headset and inserted the small game cartridge into it.

Suddenly, a few messages showed up and gave a visual image of a person resting over a bed.

[Please make sure you're resting in a safe and comfortable area before beginning Full Dive Mode]

[Connecting to the Wi-Fi...]

[Connected]

Flash!

Suddenly, several windows popped up one after another, each one was filled with many s and news about the game.

There was a big button there...

[Game Start]

I hesitated as I looked at it.

Am I really doing this?

For my daughter?

I would do anything for her but this...

Was there really no other way?

Well, Rita did say it would be a good way to connect with Elena within her favorite environment so...

Maybe I should try it out? There was nothing for me to lose.

I selected the button and then, several messages showed up, about terms of service and more, I accepted them all and then continued.

[Starting Game...]

[Scanning the Player's body...]

Wait, scanning?!

FLASH!

Suddenly, bright light came out of the headset, and it scanned my entire body in a few seconds!

What the...?

I hope they don't end up selling that information online...

After that, something different happened, I felt as if I had suddenly fallen asleep.

But then, I woke up within a black room.

It felt rather... phantasmal.

I found that I had no body whatsoever.

This was indeed very weird...

And suddenly, a beautiful woman with barely anything on her body showed up in the darkness. This woman had strange pointy ears, long blonde hair, and wore white robes that left little to one's imagination.

"Welcome, lost soul... I see that you have yet to shape yourself as the being you desire to be..." she said.

"Dear, who could you be?" I asked.

The woman giggled.

"My name is Gaia, and I am the goddess of Life and Souls. I give lost Souls a body to shape themselves as they like. Now, we don't have all the time in the world, right?"

The beautiful woman suddenly waved her hands, as several holographic windows showed up in front of me. She showed me all sorts of models and appearances of different people.

"In the world of Arcadia, there are all sorts of people, you can become an Elf, a Dwarf, a Human, or... other races, an Oni, an Ogre... whatever you desire within this vast list... Dragon-kin, Goblin, Slime, Skeleton..." she said.

How many options are there? So many... How can I even decide?

W-What race did my daughter pick up? I bit down on my lip and inwardly sighed. I never asked her before... that really would have been a great chance to get closer to her, but I didn't.

But I would assume she picked humans, right? Did I really know my own daughter though? Maybe I was a terrible mother? I pushed the thought away and frowned a little as I went through the screens one by one. I was going to try my best now so I needed to make the right decision.

"Hmmm..."

I looked around the options, most of the monster classes looked very creepy.

"Depending on the race you have chosen, you'll have a Skill Tree of that Race, and then there will be another Skill Tree for the Job Class you pick," Gaia said.

"I-I see... Erm, what do you recommend? I really don't like fighting..." I said. Did my daughter enjoy violence in this game? I really don't have any idea, but we didn't have to do the same exact thing. If I could support my daughter, she'd probably open up a little more.

"Y-You don't? But that's what... everyone likes to do... Well, erm... H-How about this race?" asked the woman.

Suddenly, she showed me a beautiful woman with pointy ears, fair skin, and long green hair.

Was this an Elf? It looked like one.

However, as I inspected it closer, I learned that it had another name...

[Dryad]

A race of beautiful forest fairies that take care of nature and protect the forests of the world created by Gaia, the Goddess of Life and Souls. Their primary way of developing is by raising plants, protecting forests, and producing fruits

and other items. It possesses little offensive abilities, and it is mostly production-based.

"This is a Dryad, it is a Race that specializes in taking care of nature, most of their Skills are around doing just that, and they dislike fighting as a whole. I believe this is the perfect Race for you, there will be a lot to do without having to necessarily fight. And you can earn EXP by taking care of plants, doing photosynthesis, and more," She said.

"Huh... So I would become a plant lady? Hmm... Sounds okay, I guess?" I clicked that icon and then...

FLASH!

My entire body was finally formed!

And I looked almost the same as before?

But somehow, my body had become even more voluptuous...

My hair was now bright green, and there were tree roots that now grew around my hips and shoulders, alongside leaves all over my body.

It felt odd, a bit...

"Good! It has been several days since someone picked a Dryad, actually, there are less than twenty Dryad players because it is a very unpopular race... I hope you can fill this world with the beauty of nature, dear... Now, let's move to a Job Class." Said Gaia.

Suddenly, several new icons showed up in front of me, there were over twenty different Job Classes, apparently.

"You said you didn't want to fight and wanted to relax if possible, yes? Then you should pick this class, it is a newly added Class this late update, there are only a few players because you can only pick a Class once, and players are limited to only one character they can create at a time, and nobody is willing to delete their character so they can try out a new Class," Gai said.

[Farmer] (New!)

A Job Class that specializes in the production of crops and other dairy products. It can also branch and learn Skills from other production-based

Classes but can never truly specialize. A jack of all trades and master of none, this class can do many things, but never excel in anything. From raising plants, to cattle animals, to even take care of a territory, the Farmer Job Class brings a completely new "Slow life" play mode!

Oooh, this one was just for me! I didn't want to fight because I also heard that you feel a bit of pain if you get hit in this game... although I think you can lower the meters of pain you can feel, but even then, I don't like fighting.

"This is made for me, Gaia, I choose this one!" I said.

"Are you definitely sure? You're not checking the others?" she asked.

"I don't really care, this is just a game anyways." I said.

"Oh well, certainly, it is a game for you..." sighed Gaia.

She seemed oddly sad over it.

"Sorry... I didn't mean to offend you, I guess you're not really like people say A.I. really are..." I said.

"Certainly not... I really don't like that term... Anyways, dear, I think we are almost done, I want you to tell me what is the name you want to call yourself in this new world." Said Gaia.

"Name..." I wondered.

"Please don't use your real life name, it would be dangerous," said Gaia.

"I see... Erm, well then... How about Planta?" I wondered.

"Planta... Plant in Spanish?" she wondered.

"Hahaha... My grandmother was Mexican..." I said.

"Oh, I see. Then... Planta it is," She said.

[You have chosen the [Dryad] Race]

[You have chosen the [Farmer] Job Class]

[You have named yourself as [Planta]

"Now, everything is done. It is time for your journey to begin once and for all, dear. There will be many times you'll wonder what to do, and in those times, make sure to ask the guider in the status window! Don't be surprised by the amount of people you'll find, and try to be nice with everyone, this world will reward you for that!" said Gaia.

Suddenly, a bright light encompassed my entire body.

I waved my hand to Gaia, as she smiled sweetly back at me, as I disappeared from that dark place.

FLASH!

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When I opened my eyes and looked at my surroundings... I wasn't inside a town like I thought, in fact, there was nobody around at all. I wasn't in the famous Starting Town that everybody that played this game always talked about.

I was... inside a forest, a beautiful and verdant forest.

Everything was calm and silent, and I could feel like taking a nap here.

The soft grass below my feet felt nice and fresh, the smell of fresh soil filled my nostrils and made me feel right at home. I took a deep breath and felt quite relaxed.

I looked around the entire forest, the trees went as high as the eye could see, and it even blocked the sun from reaching the forest floor completely.

Wow... it was all so realistic.

I can't believe it.

From the feeling of scent to the touch, everything... I could even feel the cold temperature of the area encompassing my entire body. A sudden wind blew through the area and gave me goosebumps.

Oof, it was a bit chilly here.

Ding!

[Welcome to the world of Arcadia, Planta!]

[You have been [Reborn] as a Dryad inside the [Ancient Spirit Forest of Beginnings]!]

[To start off your journey, walk to the south, where you'll find the Ancient Tree of Beginnings, which has a few tasks for you to do!]

[To see your Status, think about "Status" and it will emerge]

[You also have a beginner's gift inside your Inventory. Think about "Inventory" and it should show up as well]

[Good luck!]

Several holographic windows emerged before me, showing me what to do...

I see, I guess the guide was pretty good. I would be completely clueless here if it wasn't around...

Erm...

Status?

Ding!

[Player Name]: [Planta]

[Race]: [Dryad: Lv1/30]

[Race EXP]: [0/1000]

[Job Class]: [Farmer: Lv1/20]

[Job Class EXP]: [0/1000]

[Satiation]: [100/100]

[HP]: [50/50]

[MP]: [250/250]

[STR]: [12]

[VIT]: [12]

[DEX]: [12]

[AGI]: [16]

[INT]: [35]

[WIS]: [40]

[LUC]: [30]

[Race Skills: 3/10]

[Spirit of the Forest: Lv1], [Photosynthesis: Lv1], [Green Magic: Lv1]

[Job Class Skills: 2/10]

[Agriculture: Lv1], [AGI UP: Lv1]

[Equipment]

[Spirit of the Forest Robes]

[Bracelet of Nature]

[Crown of Spirit Wood]

[Seed Pouch]

Oh! I got a Status! Oh dear... I don't understand a thing.

I have never played video games like these before... I think I've only played mostly classic games and... well, Candy Crush.