



Starting from Zero

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Synopsis :

If video game currency is to exchange with real life currency, then it must have a powerful economic entity to guarantee the exchange rate. Furthermore this entity is none other than a country's government. But why would a government guarantee the ability to exchange video game currency with real life currency?

War can also be fought with currency. Winning victory without firing a shot is a way to topple a country. A game where real money can be exchanged, a super money-making machine. Its name is <<Zero>>, and

it is a financial explosion from head to tail.

Info :

<http://www.novelupdates.com/series/starting-from-zero/>

Raws :

<http://www.qidian.com/Book/22919.aspx>

<http://me.qidian.com/authorIndex.aspx?id=13342>

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<https://casteliacones.wordpress.com/projects/from-zero/>

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Vol 2 C03 - C06

<https://penofhope.com/starting-from-zero/>



Chapter 1 – Shopping

Author's note: Just a small statement that the original text was named <Zero>. Using the current name is purely because the original was renamed, so everyone should not try to link the text to the title, because there isn't any relationship from the start!

"Are you kidding! We've been waiting for so long!" A youth grumbled.

"So what! I came without even having time to eat breakfast, at least you ate a hamburger!" Ah Wei mumbled to himself.

Ah Wei, named Liang Wei, is my roommate and best friend and we've known each other since we were young. We were in the same class in junior high and we also attended the same school during our high school years. In university, we were again sorted into the same class as well as the same dormitory. We've been playing games together since junior high and at that time, the game room in Ah Wei's house was our favourite! Now that we've entered university, Ah Wei and I cohabit in a two person room; it's mainly because I am more antisocial by nature, and therefore, have no friends other than Ah Wei! Currently, we are first year students. Now that the summer vacation has just ended, since we're here early and it'll be a long while before we start having classes, using this time to play games in the dorm is also not bad!

Ah Wei's family is pretty rich since his family deals in estate but I do not know exactly how much they have, except that it's less than my family. Next to his own room is his specialised gaming room, and the hundred or so different electronics in it are all bought for him by his family! My

family's situation is a little more complicated. My father operates a multinational corporation named the Dragon Fate Corporation. The corporation does not have a main operational system; it basically does anything that can get money.

Actually, the Dragon Fate Corporation's greatest source of income are specialised military contracts. What? You don't know what specialised military contracts are? A special sort of army craft refers to the manufacturing of various sorts of military equipment, like live military equipment, electronic military equipment, energy-fueled military equipment, space military equipment, etc. that require an especially high amount of skill to craft and is not suitable for mass production. If not for the fact that I'm the young master, I really wouldn't know what the Dragon Fate Corporation deals in! This Dragon Fate Corporation was left to my father by my grandfather, and it is now the world's second largest enterprise. Father holds a total of 51% of the shares. I'm also not clear as to how much these shares are worth, except that it is higher than the country's Gross National Product last year.

Mother is China Company's president but her circumstances are different from father's. China Company was brought up through her own effort and as such, mother is in control of 78% of the shares. Even though China Company isn't big yet, the net value of mother's shares still comes to more than a hundred million. Of course, compared to father's Dragon Fate Corporation, it is merely a drop within a vast body of water! Because my family was too wealthy, I did not have the normal childhood a child should have. Instead, no matter whatever I did, I would be followed by more than a hundred bodyguards. Even when I was going to the toilet, ten or so men would circle around with their backs facing me. My parents were always busy with work, and both of them even clinched a business deal each during my tenth birthday party!

Because bodyguards would follow no matter where I went, it was really difficult to make any friends. In addition to that, I grew to not be able to believe in friendship because the rare few who approached me of their own accord all turned out to have befriended me due to my family's wealth. As such, I only have Ah Wei as my only friend. (In truth, my parents hoped that I would be a little happier being together with Ah Wei)

From then on, my family tried their best to provide me with an environment a normal person would have and not make me feel like I was of a privileged class. With that, my identity has been meticulously hidden and dad had even used his connections to remove all records in every department. Right now, basically, a majority of people don't even know that my dad has a child, let alone know who I am. The most obvious advantage of this is that the over hundreds of bodyguards who follow behind me have now dwindled down to a mere few who hide in the shadows and guard. I can now also attend normal school like everyone else. (During elementary school, I was taught by a teacher who was specially hired by Ah Wei's family and Ah Wei was schooled together with me). It's because of this strange childhood that made it difficult for me to befriend others, and it cultivated my antisocial nature!

Actually, there's another reason as to why I'm largely hindered from getting friends, and that is my voice and appearance. In fact, I'm not ugly in the least; rather that that, I look very pretty. That's right. It's pretty. Basically, I would be able to get into the rankings within any beauty contest throughout the world.

However, the problem is that I, as a hot blooded male, have a completely unmanly body. Please note that I am not a pervert. From the medical perspective, I am wholly male. I have whatever I should have, and I don't have whatever I should not have. Everything is completely regular,

even my sexuality. Yet! 99.99% of people are unable to guess my gender right without any prior knowledge. (Depression!) Every time a guest comes to visit, the first thing they say when they see me will be: President, daughter Ling looks so pretty!

Indeed, the first impression a large majority of people hold of me is that I am a fresh and pure absolute beauty. And for some unknown reason, my voice is the same sweet child's voice as it had been before puberty occurred, making it even harder for my gender to be recognised! Think about it. How am I supposed to befriend a group of guys who stare at me while drooling? Because of this appearance, I can't even get any peace while going to school. Since young, the number of incidents that had occurred where I scared a group of guys due to emerging from the male toilet number are at least 200!

Therefore, for such a long while, the only guy the same age as me who could treat me as a guy was Ah Wei, my most loyal friend. (The main reason why he could resist my beauty was because he grew up with me. Such thoughts didn't occur to him when we were young, so it's already become a habit now that we've grown older. Ah Wei is also actually very lecherous. He complains about how it'll be hard for him to pick a girlfriend in future since I'm so pretty, as he won't be able to accept them if they look ordinary! But really, usually, he will have a reaction as long as it's a girl!)

Today, Ah Wei and I are queuing and waiting to get a model of the newest Internet game <Zero>. It's the first issuing of the game today and the first ten thousand to get an account number will also get a special prize. The special prize is <Zero>'s special electronic virtual reality headgear, as well as a random hidden prize in-game. The headgear doesn't really matter, since it's already year 2062 and the market value for this sort of headgear is only three hundred RMB, so it isn't all that

precious. Rather than that, what was more attractive was the random hidden prize. In truth, this <Zero> is the product of a collaboration between my dad's company and the world's largest conglomerate group, a commercial trade group the equivalent of the European Union and it is being represented by my mom's China Company. However, dad said that I could not set myself up for special treatment, and that if I wanted an account number, then I had to queue for it myself, so here I am!

I forgot to introduce myself. I am Shen Lin, a person from New Nanjing. This New Nanjing requires a little explanation. In the year 2012, the large scale conflict between China and Japan over sea boundaries escalated into war. In the midst of war, Japan fired thirty seven giant atmosphere-fueled bullets at China. Luckily, thirty six of those were successfully intercepted by the space-oriented interception system. (This system was the first successful ammunition business by the Dragon Fate Corporations, and that was when grandfather was still in control of the Dragon Fate Corporations). However, the last atmosphere-fueled bullet still fell in Nanjing, and the entire of Nanjing was shifted into flat land. The number of people who had died immediately surpassed the number of deaths that had occurred when Japan had carried out the Nanjing Massacre by four times, reaching an astronomical number of 1.35 million. In an attack of revenge, China threw a crust bomb at Japan's Honshu Island, sending one of Japan's four main islands sinking straight into the Pacific Ocean. (Currently, Japan has three main islands left) The resulting tsunami had also spread severely to neighbouring countries, and so, China had to reimburse North and South Korea 520.2 trillion RMB. This New Nanjing was rebuilt on the ruins of the original Nanjing.

"Look, the doors are open!" Ah Wei jolted me awake from my reverie.

Squeezing forward with all their strength is really enough to make a person faint to death. The queue that originally had some semblance of

order broke up in confusion the very moment the door was opened. I was practically swept off my feet and forcefully lifted into the sale hall by the stream of people. Upon entering the hall, the situation became even more chaotic. The hall that was originally not very large was now crammed with more than three thousand people, and at least ten thousand more were still outside, trying to get in. Ah Wei, who was originally standing behind me, had also been swept to some unknown place.

Seeing that the area in front which sold account numbers had already started its sale, I could only violently squeeze towards the window. The security were doing their best to maintain order, but it seemed to be of no avail. "Save me!" I heard a very weak cry for help, and the voice seemed to be coming from under my feet. With much difficulty, I looked down and seemed to see someone being stepped on by others until she couldn't stand up. If this were to continue, the person being trampled on would definitely be stamped to death. With all my might, I pushed apart the dense crowd of people around me. Using my shoulders to block and prevent them from closing in again, I reached my hand out to pull the person up.

I froze on the spot, the person whom I had saved turned out to actually be someone who was so beautiful, it seemed like she was a goddess who was left stranded to wander about in this mortal world, her beauty had completely surpassed mine. Until today, I had not many people who were like her, so normally, there were no women who would dare to walk with me — After all, nobody would want to play a supporting role! However, she was currently covered all over with footprints and looked extremely haggardly, yet even this fact could not conceal her beauty.

"Thanks, sister!" Although her voice was very sweet, it felt as if someone had splashed a bucket of ice water on me, yet another one recognised my

gender wrongly!

"It's no trouble, at times like these, it's better to pull you up than watch you get trampled to death, after all! Do you need me to send you to the hall?" The moment these words left my mouth, I instantly regretted it. If I really had to send her out, it would be guaranteed that I won't have the ability to squeeze my way back in again to be one of the first ten thousand to get an account number. Besides, this game was being distributed across the world simultaneously, so even if New Nanjing was where <Zero>'s distribution company, China Company's general headquarters, was located, handing out three to five hundred was already considered pretty good.

"No! I want to get an account number!" The girl's words made me release the breath I had been holding in relief

"Alright, follow me closely!"

As we started to continue pressing on towards the window, I spared no effort in pushing a path open. Nearly half-dead, I finally swam to the window. That's right, I swam indeed, because I absolutely did not have any time to spare to walk over with my two feet. "I want an account number!" I rushed at the saleslady and shouted loudly.

"I want an account number too!" The girl had reached the window ledge as well.

The saleslady quickly handed two headgears over, "Account numbers are on the headgear, you can refer to the manual regarding anything you're unclear on."

There was no other way but to squeeze through the crowd to reach the exit. We managed to reach the door with great difficulty. Looking at the dense mass of people, I didn't dare to think about how I had managed to squeeze in just now. Gasps of breath came from behind me, and as I looked back, I saw that it was that girl.

"Thank you! I'm called Lijia, Lin Lijia. Was it not for sister's help today, let alone getting the account number, I might even have lost life!" She extended her head in a large gesture.

Holding her small, tender, dirt black, (Turns out it was white) hand, I gave up trying to explain. In any case, the chances of us meeting again were negligible. "It's nothing! Since we've both received our account numbers, then I'll remember your account number and whisper you in-game."

"Sure!" Lijia copied the account number from her headgear and passed it to me. "Then I'll be leaving first, contact me when you're free!"

"Okay!" Seeing her move further and further away, I turned back and looked at the crowd. Figuring it was probably impossible to find Ah Wei, I could only choose to return to the dorm.

I finally reached the dorms, but Ah Wei wasn't back yet. Taking out the light breakfast I had brought back on the way, I began eating while looking through the manual, since the game only starts at eight, officially.

The manual was very thin, and it only had a total of seventeen pages. As it turns out, these first ten thousand account numbers are related to the headgear. In reality, the account number isn't anything special, what was crucial was this headgear instead. When this headgear first launches the game, the account number used by it will be recognised by the system as a prize awardee, and it will carry out the random prize lottery. Of course, every account number can only accept one reward chance, so even if you have two headgears, but only one account number, it would be useless to log in with both headgears. The system will only acknowledge the first reward, and the second one will be ignored. The manual also mentions that each person can only use one account. The first time a person enters the game, the headgear will automatically scan the user's brainwaves as well as irises and bind it. Once the binding is complete, the headgear will definitely not be able to be used by anyone else. This point thoroughly negates the possibility of power leveling as well as account theft. Besides, everyone's identity will also be bound to the account number. A person who has used an account number before will no longer be able to apply for a second account number. The other explanations have been omitted as they only explain how to look for system NPCs regarding inquiries in-game.

Just when I put down the manual, I saw that Ah Wei had returned. "How was it?"

Ah Wei's face was filled with dismay, "Don't talk about it. I got crowded out the moment I rushed up, and I couldn't get to touch even a corner of it! You got it!" Ah Wei saw my headgear. "But it doesn't really matter, since I'm not a professional gamer. It's doesn't matter even if my account number is ordinary."

"It's fine. I'll bring you after I've leveled, and you'll definitely rise faster

than anyone else." I consoled

"That's great! When the time comes, you better not go back on your words!"

Finishing my lunch early, I took a replenishing nap to prepare for the all-nighter. At seven, I climbed out of bed, ate dinner and started waiting for the game to start officially. After an arduously long wait, (Though really, it wasn't even half an hour) eight o'clock finally arrived!

Chapter 2 — Character Creation (1)

Starting up the headgear, everything before my eyes went black. Following which, I appeared in a light blue room. Extremely mechanical noises rang. "Locked onto irises, attempting access to brainwaves." Paused for two seconds. "Access normal, body scan normal, identity binded, installation complete. Welcome to using our system. Next up, we'll be handing you over to the host brain guide!" There was another two second pause before a female's voice sounded at my ears. Although it wasn't very attractive, it was actually quite easy on the ears.

"Hello! Welcome to the world of <Zero>. The account number you are using comes with a prize. Please start spinning to obtain your prize item."

Suddenly, a gigantic turntable appeared in the room. I looked at it doubtfully, asking, "May I ask what meaning this reward item holds?"

"The number of prizes every prize-inclusive account can receive is random. The number of prizes you will receive is determined after you spin for your prize. As for the number, the largest value is four and the smallest value is zero."

"What? Zero? Then wouldn't it become the same as a normal account number that doesn't come with a prize?" How is this damned system so perverted! If the prize-inclusive account that I had been squeezed half to death for all came to nothing, I would definitely cry to death!

"Please start spinning for your prize, alright?" The system urged.

I felt helpless, but since there were a total of five numbers, the possibility of getting a zero is only twenty percent. Walking up to it, I spun the turntable with force and the turntable immediately started spinning quickly. Watching as the turntable slowed down, my heart had already risen to my throat. The pointer was now at three, and the turntable was still spinning slowly, but it seemed like it was about to stop soon! Inwardly, I prayed for it to by all means, not stop at zero. Yet the pointer was still moving, and it was now already at one. I pray, even if it stops at one, that would still be fine!

The pointer was already at zero, but the turntable was still moving slowly. However, it seemed to be almost impossible for it to move beyond the zero area. I had already closed my eyes in disappointment. After a crisp "ding", the system's prompt sounded. "Congratulations! You've spun the largest prize number of four items!"

"What!" I opened my eyes, not daring to believe my ears, only to see that the pointer had seemed to stop at the line between zero and four. However, since the system's accuracy level is greater than the human eye's, it should probably be right.

The system confirmed once again, "You've indeed spun a four. Please confirm your own character. Your account number can create two characters, so would you like to split your prizes between two characters, or have them all concentrated on one?"

What a joke! Need this still be asked? "One!" When playing games, obviously only one main character is enough, wouldn't splitting it between two be an evident waste!?

"Please set up your character first. The prizes will be used on this

character's person."

"Sure, but how do I set it up?"

"First, please announce your character's name. This name will be your character's name for life. After setting it up, you will not be able to change it unless you kill yourself and remake your character. As much as possible, please use a Chinese name."

"Zi Ri!" I've always been using this cool, cool name and I've used this username in every game I play.

"Character Zi Ri has been set up, now the calculation of your prizes will take place." The system paused for two seconds. "Your first prize item has been decided. Your first prize item is a granted ability for you to also be able to choose from secret races. Now, please choose a race for your character."

"Race? What races can I choose from?"

A white light flashed in front of my eyes, and instantly, two rows of people appeared. The first row of people stood directly on the floor, while those in the second row hovered in mid-air. Looking closer, these fellows seem to be rather familiar-looking. Wait! Aren't these me? Why do they all look sort of similar to me!

The system seemed to sense my misgivings. "These are the models of the different races that were set up based on your appearance. You must first choose a race before modifying your appearance of up to a

difference of 10%. The bottom row comprise of races anyone can choose from, while the top row can only be chosen by those who have been granted the secret races from the prize-inclusive account numbers. Normal races include twelve different types, which are: Orc, Human, Elf, Dwarf, Gnome, Fire Elemental Human, Water Elemental Human, Earth Elemental Human, Undead, Air Elemental Human, Goblin and Monster. Special races include seven different types, which are namely: Angel, Devil Race, Half-elf, Spirit Elemental People, Half-orc, Half-angel and Demon Race.”

Since the row above was designated as secret races from a prize, then they should definitely be stronger than this row below. “Can you give a specialised introduction to the specialties of each race above?”

The system instantly removed the bottom row, and the races on the top row automatically flew in front of me. “You can see their appearances directly, I will mainly introduce their attributes. First would be the Angel. This race’s specialty is that in the situation where all their attribute points are the same, their attack and defense abilities will be higher. They also have high HP and the innate self-recovery magic ‘Divine’. The second is the Devil Race. Both their defensive abilities and magic attacks are very high, their regeneration is also relatively quick. The third would be Half-elves. This race possesses both the great agility and night-vision of the elf but at the same time, it also has higher HP than normal Elves, which can usually reach a human’s level. The fourth would be the Spirit Elemental Human. This race is naturally magic-oriented. All the magic they release will have a 5% increase in attack power, and their SP recovery rate is also very fast. The fifth would be Half-orcs. This race has high attack and defense just like the Orcs. However, at the same time, they will also have the agility and intelligence levels of someone with the Human race. They are also able to undertake the mage profession that would definitely not appear for the Orcs. The sixth is the Half-angel. This race has attack and defense levels similar to that of the Angel race, but are usually slightly

lower than them. On the other hand, Half-angels have the restriction of being unable to learn attack-type magic and their resistance against Dark-type magic surpasses an Angel's. The last would be the Demon Race. This is a very unusual race. The Demon Race has mixed blood of the Angels as well as the Devil Race. They have very high physical attack power and magic attack power. Unlike Angels, they do not have a fifty percent damage absorption towards Light-type magic, nor do they have a fifty percent damage absorption towards Dark-type magic like the Devil Race. However, at the same time, they do not have zero defense against Dark-type magic, like the Angels, or zero defense against Light-type magic, like the Demon Race. Basically, they are a middleground race. Also, the system restricts the number of characters who are Demon Race. Only the first ten account numbers who choose it will have a chance. In future, only six races will appear in the selection for the prize races.

Haha! Now I understand. However, it's still hard for me to make a choice, since all of the above are good choices! "May I ask if you can exclude the races I eliminate?"

"Do you intend to decide by elimination? Of course it's fine!"

Damn! What kind of system is this! Such an extraordinary AI! Who cares, I'll choose first. "Spirit Elemental Human is something I definitely won't choose, it's too ugly!" The Spirit Elemental Human before my eyes instantly disappeared as specks of stars, leaving six characters behind.

"Half-orc is too barbaric, I don't want it." Another flash, and there were five races left.

"Half-angels and Half-elves don't have an obvious advantage, eliminate!" The last three! How should I choose this time! "My character's

name is Zi Ri (lit. Purple Sun), and an angel doesn't seem to suit this name, so remove it!" That devil race is clearly a mage race, but I prefer knights. "I've decided, the race I am selecting is the Demon Race!"

The system replied immediately, "The Demon Race has been successfully selected as your race. Congratulations, you are the first person to have chosen the Demon Race, so the system awards you with a basic attribute point. Now, please start setting up your character's appearance."

In front of me, the only person left was of the Demon Race, and I looked carefully. There was no difference in height, it was the same 172 cm as in reality; it looks like choosing the Demon Race has no impact on height. Four well-proportioned limbs, and a face that was slightly evil; besides the additional pair of black wings on its back, there was almost no difference between this character's appearance and the way I looked in real life. "May I ask if I can get rid of this pair of wings?"

"Sorry! Wings are a specialty of the Demon Race, it's the same as how you can not request for a dwarf player to grow above 1.6 metres. But rest assured, these wings can be hidden, so if you do not display them, nobody will be able to see them."

"That's fortunate! Then, I want to make the lines on my face a little straighter, I don't want so many curves. Make the edges of my nose bridge a little more pronounced, right, and make my eyebrows a little sharper as well!" Looking at the character in front of me change gradually, I was quite pleased with my own changes.

"You have reached the limit for modifications, can you please verify if you will use this model?"

I gave it a look over. Although I had tried my best to make it uglier and more manly, no matter how I look at it, the character in front of me still had a girl's appearance! Sigh! Forget it, let's just go with this! "I confirm that I'm using this model!"

"Verification success! Character generation complete!"

Chapter 3 — Character Creation (2)

The system prompt sounded again. “We will now commence the calculation of your second prize item.” It was another two seconds of silence. “The result of your second prize item is that you will receive an additional main profession as well as an additional job. Because normal accounts can have one main profession as well as two jobs, you will therefore have two main professions and three jobs. Next, please designate your main professions. As you are of the Demon Race, there are some professions you will not be able to undertake. You can choose from these six professions: Warrior, Spellblade, Shadowblade, Dark Warrior, Beast Tamer and Assassin. Of these, Beast Tamer is part of the hidden professions that not everyone has access to.”

“Could you introduce them?” I was still going through with this prudently, listening first before making my decisions.

“The warrior profession is a profession of purely physical attacks. It has bonuses in attack power, defense, as well as regeneration attributes. In the future, Warriors can upgrade to become Knights, Holy Knights, and then Dragon Knights. The Spellblade profession has a mix of physical attacks as well as magic attacks. It possesses bonuses in attack power, defense, magic, magic defense, regeneration speed, as well as magic regeneration speed. However, the bonuses for each are not too high. Spell Blades will upgrade to Mage Bards, then Spirit Warrior, and finally Demigods. The bonuses for the Shadowblade profession are similar to the Spell Blade’s, and they will upgrade to Magic Minstrels, Evil Spirit Warriors and finally, Great Demons. The Dark Warrior’s bonuses are similar to the Warrior’s, and their profession upgrades are, in order, Dark Knights, Dullahans, and finally, Hell Knights. Beast Tamers rely mainly on keeping magic pets and servant familiars for battle; they can also use magic attacks as well. Their bonuses are for magic attack power, magic

defence, magic regeneration speed, number of pets that can be kept and number of familiars that can be controlled. In the future, they can be upgraded to Summoner, then Monster Spirit, and lastly, Beast God. The assassin profession is mainly physical attack oriented. It has bonuses for attack power, agility, and the servant familiar control stats. Assassins will rise in grade to become Hitmen, Murderers, and lastly, Godslayers. The above are concise introductions to each of these professions. Have you decided which profession you will choose?"

My character's name is Zi Ri (lit. Purple Sun), so I ought to take a shadier path. Because of this, I'll definitely not be choosing the Warrior or Spellblade professions. Although Shadowblades benefit in both martial arts and magic, in the end, it's still strong at neither, so I won't be choosing it. Shady professions like the Assassin do not suit my character, so I'll be passing that one up too. "May I ask if I can choose two main professions?" This time round, I didn't dare to make things difficult for the system anymore, so I used polite speech as much as possible.

"That's right!"

"Then, set my main professions as Dark Warrior and Beast Tamer."

"Main professions confirmed. Now, we'll begin the selection of jobs. The jobs you can choose from include: Blacksmith, Alchemist, Appraiser, Breeder, Stonemason, Porter and Mailman."

The old rule of getting advice first applies again. "May I know what the specialities of each profession are?"

"Blacksmiths can learn the technique of gathering and can obtain many

special materials, and will upgrade to Forgemasters. Alchemists can collect herbs themselves to make bottled medicine, and they can upgrade to Immortal Alchemists. Appraisers can identify items as well as monsters. They can upgrade to Appraisal Experts. Breeders can capture pets and servant familiars themselves, and have bonuses for control of pets and servant familiars. They can upgrade to Magic Beast Experts. Stonemasons can build houses themselves, as well as collect precious stones. They can upgrade to Architects. Porters don't have their own special abilities, but the job can increase your HP and endurance limit, and they can be upgraded to Bearer. Mailmen have no special abilities, but have endurance and agility boosts instead. They can upgrade to Intelligence Agent. The above are these professions' specialties. Have you decided on the jobs you will take?"

"I'll still use the elimination method."

"Alright!"

"While the stonemason can build his own house, the chances that I'll come to use it are not high. Delete."

"There are still six professions; you have to eliminate three more!"

"Although Alchemists can refine their own medicine, I certainly have no time to leisurely look for herbs in the mountain. Eliminate."

"Five more items!"

"Although Porters and Mailmen have bonuses, I doubt they'll be a lot."

It'll probably not be too useful. Eliminate."

"Only Blacksmith, Appraiser and Breeder are left. Are you sure you'll be choosing these three professions?"

"Yes. Confirm!"

"Confirmed profession choices, next up will be the calculation for the third prize." It was still two seconds of silence. "Your third prize has emerged, the prize you have received is that you will randomly be awarded four automatically added bonus stats."

"What do you mean by random automatically awarded bonuses?"

"Random automatically added bonus stats mean that these four points will be added by the system randomly after you're done allotting points into your stats. Therefore, you have no way of knowing what stats will be added for you."

"Damn! Then wouldn't I have to consider it as not having any bonus stat points added! Forget it, at least it's better than not having any."

"Then, please start allotting stat points for your character!" Suddenly, a stat box flashed in front of me. "The stats you can add points to include: Strength, Agility, Intelligence, Charisma, Energy and Constitution for a total of six types of stats. A standard character has a thirty fundamental points, but since you are of the Demon Race, three extra points will be added to your basic points. As you were the first player to choose the Demon Race, you will have an additional reward of one point. Therefore,

the points you can distribute come to a total of thirty four. In addition, we would like to point out that your basic points will directly affect your future stat bonuses, and you will be unable to change this bonus in future. Later on, your points will be automatically distributed based on the proportion of stats allotted now, and the player's opinion will not be taken into account. Have you decided how you will distribute your points?"

"May I ask what that distribution based on proportion means?"

"After this, every time you level up, you will get thirty four basic points. These basic points will automatically be distributed based on your current distributed figures to your stat points. For example, if you assign thirty points to Strength, then every time you level up in future, thirty points will be added to Strength. Otherwise, if you assign no points into Strength, then in future, the points in Strength will always be zero, no matter how many times you level up."

"Got it! Then how do these stat points affect a character's performance? What is the specific conversion rate?"

"Sorry! Publicly, this game's specific conversion rate can only be up to the player's own speculation. The company only allows us to inform players of the relationship between stats and basic points."

"Then tell me how they're related!"

"Strength points affect your regeneration, physical attacks, physical defense, as well as endurance. Agility affects your movement speed, magic attack speed, physical defense, magic defense, physical attack

accuracy, as well as magic attack accuracy. Intelligence affects your magic value upper limit, and the types of magic you can learn. Each type of magic has a certain Intelligence requirement, so you will only be able to learn the corresponding magic if you fulfil that criteria. Charisma mainly affects the number of magical pets you can rear, the number of servants familiars you can recruit and the attitudes NPCs will adopt towards you. Characters with high Charisma can frequently receive NPCs' special hidden assignments. However, it needs to be specially explained that once you've distributed your points into Charisma, even if your Charisma increases in future, it will only affect your relationship with NPCs. This is because your appearance, as well as the number of magical pets and servant familiars you can control will only be affected by the first time you allot stats into Charisma, and will not increase with your Charisma stat in future. Energy affects your magic attacks, magic regeneration speed, physical attacks' accuracy and magic attacks' accuracy. Constitution affects your HP limit, health regeneration speed, stamina, and magic limit."

"So complicated! For heaven's sake!" I began to enter a state of frantic calculation and thinking — Twenty minutes later. "I've decided. I have thirty four basic stat points, right?"

"That's right. It's a total of thirty four points from the basic thirty points in addition to four points from the prize."

"I want to first add two points to charisma. This attribute doesn't seem to be very useful, so I'll only put a few points into it."

"You still have thirty-two basic points."

"I don't intend to mainly use magic, so three points in energy is

enough.”

“You still have twenty nine points.”

“As a Warrior type character, I should have strong attacks and high virility. I’d like to add thirteen points to strength and eight points to endurance.”

“You still have eight basic points. You have yet to add points to agility and intelligence.”

“If agility’s too low, there might be situations where I’ll keep getting MISS. I want to add six points to agility. Put all the rest in intelligence.”

“Stat distribution complete. Now we will commence the random stat distribution.” The stat box flashed and the system reminder voiced once again. “It is concluded that the random stat will be added to Charisma.”

“Ah! How can I be so unlucky? How did it end up getting added to the most unimportant item!” Even though I felt really depressed, I could still accept it. After all, I was taking it for free! “Is there anything else I have to set up now?”

“Your character setup is complete. Your stats are now as follows.”

STR: 13	AGI: 6	INT: 2	CHA: 6	EN: 3	CONT: 8	
ATK: 11-16	DEF: 11	SPD: 7	HP: 230	Magic: 30	CTRL:	
3	SFN: 4					

“It seems acceptable! Although it isn’t OP, it’s still not bad.”

I was looking at the numbers, when the system prompt suddenly spoke yet again. “According to your main profession and jobs, the bonus to stats will be carried out. The numbers are as such after the additions.” A white light flashed yet again. I feel like my brain’s been flashed giddy!

I opened my eyes and looked! How is this a character? It’s practically become an abnormal creature! Now, the first few stat items were:

ATK: 16-26 DEF: 14 SPD: 9 HP: 275 MAGIC: 40

The scariest were the last two stats. Magic Pet Number (CTRL) had actually become 7, and the Servant Familiar Number had actually grown to 10. I was extremely afraid that the system had made a mistake. “May I ask why there are so many magical pets and servant familiars? Was it calculated wrongly?”

“There’s no error in the calculation! Charisma had six points added to it, and according to that, as well as the 50% ratio of magical pet number to Charisma, you will have three magical pet numbers. However, as Beast Tamer is one of the professions you’d chosen, there is a bonus of one magical pet number. Breeder happens to be one of your jobs, so you get another bonus of 1. Because you are of the Demon Race, you will have 2 basic pet numbers per se. Therefore, your actual magic pet number is 7. As for the number of servant familiars you can control, it would be 150% of your magical pet number; excluding the remainder, which would be 10. By the way, magic pets will level up with the experience they accumulate from battles, while servant familiars will remain at the level

they were caught at. Magic pets cannot be changed once they are selected, so please choose carefully. Servant familiars can be released, so they can be swapped for better ones at any time."

"Thanks! I understand now. Can I start the game yet?"

"Hold up, you still have a prize you've yet to receive. Now we'll begin calculations." This round took an entire half hour, and I almost thought the system had crashed! "Your last prize is an addition of five to the hidden stat, Luck."

"Adding five to Luck?"

"Yes. The luck stat can not be seen in the stat box. However, every point in Luck will affect all your probability calculations. Each point in Luck will add ten percent to an advantageous roll, which goes to say that your gear drop rate will be higher than others' by 50%, and your chance of losing equipment after being killed by monsters will be lower than others' by 50%. Generally, heavy attacks that may even result in deadly strikes which deal double damage will also occur more often. If you have a shield equipped, the probability that you will block enemy attacks will also be very high."

"Whoa! Such a hack! After gambling for half a day, this stat is the most OP! Haha! Haha!"

Chapter 4 — Profession Authentication

It suddenly brightened, and in the midst of my manic cackling, I was sent to a quaint, interesting small village. Damn! The surroundings were actually filled with people. Everyone was staring at me as if they were looking at a fool. Scuttling hurriedly to the next street, I brought up the clock and saw that it was already ten. (<Zero>'s system will automatically respond to these operations, so players only need to think of them.) I had actually spent almost two entire hours setting up my character! But as the proverb goes, good preparation hastens the work. These two hours are worth it!

Maybe setting up my character had taken up too much time, but by now, the beginner village was already filled with people. The system stipulates that all who are below level twenty are classified as beginners, and are unable to leave the beginner's village. They will also have to stay within a five kilometre radius of the training area. Currently, more than five thousand players were squeezed into this not very large area.

Unused to places with a lot of people, I decided to look for a more peaceful place to train in. I should first get a rough feel for this unfamiliar environment in my head. Bringing up the status bar, I found that I only had a shirt and a pair of pants on me, which were both made of sackcloth. These totalled to an extra two points towards defense. A one-handed sword named Novice Sword was in my hands, and this long sword's attack was actually 1-1! Looking at it, it seems this is the so-called beginner equipment!

Although what I had equipped on me made me feel very depressed, I found some reprieve in the fact that the streets were filled with people who were dressed the same way as I was. Now, the first thing I had to do

was kill monsters and level up.

After running for about ten minutes, I finally reached the training area outside the beginner's village, and there was nothing I could do about it, since a beginner's moving speed was naturally very slow! It was only after I had left the village that I realised the situation had taken a turn for the worse. Everywhere outside the village, players had grouped together to gang up and attack pitiful, small spotted deer, or that groups of a dozen or so players were pursuing and attacking a wild boar! Even though the monsters were respawning very quickly, the number of players were still much higher than the number of monsters, and by a few times over, even! Right now, if I were to join them, I would definitely not be able to gain an advantage. Besides, what's more is that I naturally hate places with many people!

Because in <Zero>, beginners' levels will not appear in the rankings, so I'm unable to know which levels the fastest people are at already. Even though I couldn't see their levels, I made a rough estimate, and the fastest people should already be at levels sixteen or seventeen. That won't do! How will this young master be willing to lag behind others; within the game and outside it as well, I have to be in the lead amongst the rest! I have to make the most of my time to train.

I ran very far out from the village and even though the number of players here is still very high, but at least, in essence, one player against one monster could be accomplished here. Haha! A small spotted deer ran over. Instantly attacking, my sword fell in one clean swoop. The system prompted, "Killed one spotted deer. Received 200 experience points."

Damn! Instakill! It can't be so ridiculous! Even though my character is really ridiculous, what was absurd about it was the number of pets and

monster servants I had. My attacks shouldn't be so extreme! But seeing as to how a 60 had floated up from the spotted deer's head, that should probably be the display of how much HP the other party had lost after being attacked. Could it be that my hit had been a fatal attack? I suppose it should be!

Finding another spotted deer, I swung my sword down to chop at it. A red 30 floated up, and the spotted deer was still running. It seems like it had merely been a lucky hit just now. Attacking again at the wounded spotted deer, a 35 floated up and the spotted deer fell on the ground before disappearing. In accordance to this, the deer's HP looked to be around fifty points or so, or maybe even less.

After killing three more deer, I rose to level two. Currently, my stats have become

(These are after adding the values from equipment):

ATK: 24-32 DEF: 20 SPD: 10 HP: 290 MP: 41

Fundamentally, even normal attacks can instakill spotted deer. In one shot, after killing spotted deer continuously for half an hour, I had actually reached the twelfth level, and my stats had also become-

ATK: 68-98 DEF:65 SPD:20 HP:440 MP: 51

Looking around me, there were still many who were killing spotted deer, and their numbers were increasing. According to past experience, it should be time to change locations. After a long while, I finally reached the border of the village's training area. Here, even though the outside could be seen, there was still no way of going out. It was as if a wall was blocking. I could only continue to search for monsters, and not far away, I

caught sight of my new target — a wild boar. I rushed up to slash at it and it was killed instantly. As I had more basic points, my increase in stats for Strength were very high; the more I leveled, the greater the the difference in ratio becomes, so right now, my attacks were very monstrous. Only later did I realise, characters at level twelve attacking for 44-70 was already considered very high, and Warriors who were level twenty usually only hit for about 60-90..

I was very lucky, and actually managed to find a wild boar's cave. Wild boars here respawned really quickly, but even the respawn rate could not catch up with my instakill speed. However, I was really fortunate that wild boars belong to the category of monsters that do not attack of their own accord. One slash each, I killed for an entire hour, and currently, I'm already at level 18. Conjuring the ranking chart, there were actually already over thirty people who had appeared on the rankings. To be able to list within the rankings would go to mean that they had already broken through 20 levels. This was really not a joke, and if I do not quickly break past the twentieth level as well, there would be no hope left for me.

Twenty levels is definitely not the simple difference between a beginner and a true player. For all main professions as well as jobs, the first skill would only appear at the twentieth level. With that skill, their level grinding speed will no longer be something we can catch up to! Currently, the person who was ranked first was already level 25. Even though the experience required for higher levels was greater, they had the geographical advantage as well as that of the added skill. Since they were out of the beginner's village, they will be in locations of few players and many monsters, and as such, there will be no need for them to fight over mobs!

Hurrying, I continued to train hard for twenty more minutes, before the wonderful system prompt sounded. "Congratulations, player Zi Ri, you're

already level 20. Congratulations to you for becoming our seventy ninth player to get past the beginner barrier. You have become a true fighter. Please report immediately to the Occupations' Guild to receive your profession's skills."

I felt the scenery around me suddenly change, and I was already in the process of being transported to a gigantic public square. Opening the map's information, I took a look and realised that this city was named Cold Jade. This enormous public square is exactly Cold Jade's teleportation and resurrection point. Currently, my surroundings were absolutely empty. I suppose those who had arrived earlier had all gone to train. Actually, even if they were all here, there would still not be many people. Think about it! I am the seventy ninth person to be able to leave the beginner's village, which goes to say that in the entirety of <Zero>'s realm, there are only a total of 79 people scattered around the world, apart from those in the beginner's village. <Zero>'s map is based off of our world map, and the beginner's village would be like an illusionary realm; only those who fulfilled the criteria (as in those who are below level 20) will appear there. Once the level requirement is met, they will be sent away automatically. On the map, all the other towns are just towns who have had their names changed and had their buildings constructed with a more ancient style. Therefore, on this gigantic map, how widely separated we must be, now that there are only 79 people on it. For all I knew, I could even be the first person in this city!

For now, these things didn't matter. Following the map, I rushed to the Occupation Guild quickly. The immense hall was laid out with marble tiles and it felt like a bank's lounge. By the walls, there were more than thirty marble counters, and on every counter, there was a bronze medal. The few counters in the middle had "Main Profession support" written on them, while the counters to the side all had "Job management" on them.

Regardless, I'll just go carry out the main profession authentication first to get my skills. With this decision in mind, I immediately came to a middle counter. "Hello! I'd like to receive my profession certification."

Behind the counter, a beautiful elf gave me an enthusiastic reception. "Hello, sir (Touching, someone finally recognised that I'm a guy)! We welcome you to conduct your profession authentication. May I know which profession you'd like to authenticate?"

"I have two main professions. One is Dark Warrior, and the other would be Beast Tamer."

"Oh! You are a player who has received a prize! Certification for Dark Warrior would require one gold coin, and Beast Tamer would require two gold coins. That would be a total of three gold coins, please pay the amount."

"Ah! So expensive!" I opened my inventory helplessly, and realised that I happened to have three hundred and seven copper coins! (The conversion unit here is: 1 crystal coin = 10 RMB = 10 gold coins = 100 silver coins = 1000 copper coins) After handing over the money, I only had seven copper coins left! How poor!

The elf beauty kept the money and said nimbly, "Congratulations on becoming a Dark Warrior as well as a Beast Tamer. The skills for your main professions are sold at book stores, but they are extremely low in quantity. The truly useful skills have to be slowly learnt by the player themselves, so please find out for yourself well in future."

"What? Learn on my own? No way!" I turned around gloomily and

prepared to leave. Two main professions had already consumed all my money, I could just forget about buying skills! I think I can forget about jobs as well. I'll go earn some money before coming back!

After I had barely taken two steps, the elf beauty stopped me in my tracks. "Please wait a little!"

"Is there still anything the matter?" My heart rate began to speed up, it can't be that she still needs more money!

"You are the game's first player to receive the Beast Tamer profession, so you will be rewarded in accordance to regulations."

"Reward?" Haha, I've won a prize! Pity it's only for being the first to become a Beast Tamer, it seems like the Dark Warrior has already been authenticated before by another person! It feels like I'm being so greedy! Hehe! But thinking about it, it should be right too; this Beast Tamer is a hidden profession, so there won't be many people choosing it as their profession, it was very normal for me to be the first. No matter what, getting a prize is already good, so I asked hurriedly, "May I know what the prize is?"

"The prize is random, come over and I will help you draw your prize."

Walking to the front of the counter, the elf beauty immediately started drawing a prize for me. Reaching her hand into a black hole that seemed to come from nowhere, she picked out a piece of red paper. The elf beauty then looked at it. "Congratulations, the prize you've drawn is that you will receive a special equipment — Protection Collar. As you can control seven magical pets, you will receive seven collars."

“Collars? What would I want collars for? I only have one neck, I’m not an ultimate level nine-headed dragon! How will I wear seven?” This system is practically playing an evil joke on me!

“Heehee!” The elf beauty covered her mouth and laughed. “Those aren’t for you. Those are for your magic pets to wear.”

“Magic pets? Can magic pets in <Zero> equip items?” What a great situation!

The elf beauty explained quickly. “That’s not the case. Under normal circumstances, magic pets cannot equip items, but there are some special items that can be equipped on the magic pet’s body. Your Protection Collar would belong in that category of special items.”

“Exactly what use does this Protection Collar have?”

“The Protection Collar can link your HP to your pets’ HP. For example, if you have 3 HP left after suffering an attack, and right after, you get attacked again for 7 HP, your HP will then be reduced by 2, and the remaining 5 points will, according to the situation, be deducted from a pet who has more than 5 HP left. However, you have to note that the protection only goes one way, so when your magic pets have no HP, your HP won’t be deducted instead.

“So good! Does that mean my life won’t be in danger if my magic pets have not had all their HP spent?”

“Fundamentally, that would be so. Unless all your magic pets do not have enough HP to be deducted from. If that’s the case, you will die immediately.”

“Whoa! Sure enough, it turned out to be a good property. It looks like I’ll have to find magic pets with high HP in future. Haha! Haha!”

The elf beauty rushed to cut me off. “Magic pets should not be caught at whim. Once you make your choice, your magic pet will no longer be replaceable.”

“Oh! So it’s like this! Thanks, then!” I reached my hand out for the collars.

The elf beauty looked at me strangely. Seeing her blank stare, I couldn’t help saying, “Collars, hurry and give them to me!”

“Oh!” Only at this did she understand. “The collar isn’t granted by me. After you capture and subdue your magic pets, the collar will automatically appear around its neck.”

“So it’s like this! I’m done then? Thank you. I’ll be leaving. Goodbye.”

The elf beauty also waved goodbye to me.

Chapter 5 — Job

Walking out of the Occupations' Guild, I began to consider how I was going to train.

First, I came to a pharmacy named Yun Shan. Bearing the pain, I spent six copper coins to buy a small red potion. Ah! I only have one copper coin left! There's no helping it, I'll have to slowly collect more by defeating monsters!

I only managed to leave Cold Jade city after running for approximately twenty minutes. This large city was different from the beginner's village precisely in that the land area was so damned large. Once I was out of the city, I reached a grass plain, and there were many yak here. I remembered that the official introduction had mentioned that yaks were level 27 monsters, and that they would only retaliate when attacked, they will not gang up on people either. Beginners' level-grinding would all depend on these.

Finding a yak that was apart from the herds, I rushed to its side and slashed at it instantly. With a single attack, a red 200 floated above its head. Angered, the yak pawed at the ground twice with its front hooves before charging at me. Dodging sideways, I avoided its attack and followed up from behind with a hack to its back legs.

"Ding" The system prompted, "The yak's leg area has been injured. Its mobility is decreased by three points."

So attacking different areas has different effects! It seems I'll have to research on this a little. It's just as well that there are so many

experimental targets here. Who cares, I'll just chop the one in front of me down first. Quickly, the yak turned back and rushed at me again, but like before, I dodged the attack. When I was just beside it, I slashed at it yet again. Successfully deducted 500 points from its HP. It seems the attacks the monsters in <Zero> suffer differ with each attacked part.

Supplementing that attack, I hit that yak again for a normal 150 points, and the yak instantly fell to the ground. In quick succession, I cut down four to five more yaks and finally concluded that a yak's HP is approximately 1000 points. It looks like this fellow is a low resist, but high HP type.

Upon finding the rhythm, I began grinding frantically for levels, and before an hour had passed, I was already at level 24. I took a look at the rankings... Damn it, are these human! Right now, the first place in the rankings is taken by a Warrior by the name of Big Swords Kill Many Men, who is currently at level 32. Following close behind is a level 31 Warrior, and there are two to three people in every subsequent level. We're still only at the initial stages of the game, but people are already so competitive... Won't they get even scarier in future?! I really don't get how these fellows train. My fast level-grinding is because my attacks are perversely high, so how did these chaps rush so fast!

No way! I must overtake them, I'll need to find some shortcuts. Oh, right! I'll go take a look in the forests, who knows if I just might find some high leveled Boss, those would be good fodder for leveling!

I looked at the bottle of potion on me.

It's no good, I have to buy a few more to bring with me. Checking my inventory, I already had, hehe, 79 copper coins. Hey, who knows, I might

even have enough money with me for my job certifications. I'm going to go try my luck.

As I was running back to the Occupations' Guild, I was already at level 25. This time around, I headed towards the job management counter. It was again another beautiful elf behind the counter.

"Hello, I'd like to carry out my job authentication."

"Alright. May I know which professions you'd like to authenticate?"

"I'd like to get the certification to become a blacksmith, breeder, as well as an appraiser."

"Oh! You're a player with prizes! To become a blacksmith, you will need to foot the administrative fee of twenty copper coins. It will be thirty more for breeder and another thirty more for appraiser."

"Ah? So much!" Red-faced, I felt for the 79 copper coins I only had. I guess this young master will also meet with occasions where he's stumped by a copper coin! "I only have seventy nine, so I'm still short of one! Can I authenticate two jobs first?"

The elf beauty covered her mouth and giggled. "You're really interesting. If you have seventy nine, then seventy nine it shall be!"

"What? You're saying that seventy nine copper coins is fine too?"

“Yes!” She laughed harder.

Hurriedly, I handed over the copper coin. I watched her write on a few documents at the counter and proceed to keep them. The system prompt suddenly sounded, “Player Zi Ri has become a blacksmith and is awarded the blacksmith skills — Mining, Forging and Processing. Player Zi Ri has become a breeder and is awarded the breeder skills — Capture and Rear. Player Zi Ri has become an appraiser and is awarded the appraiser skills — Identify and Familiarise.”

“New skills! Hehe, I wonder what use they have!”

Seeing that I seemed to be completely clueless, the elf beauty took the initiative to explain. “While journeying or killing monsters, a blacksmith’s Mining Skill will allow you to see ores and minerals that can be mined, as well as directly find materials required for smelting from monsters.

The Forge skill allows you to process raw materials into weapons or defensive armor, but currently, because your forging skill is at level 0, your rate of success will be very low. In the process of forging equipment, if you fail to forge successfully, the equipment and materials will both vanish, so it would be better if you first use materials of low value to level your skill. Processing is for upgrading equipment. When you find precious stones or other special materials, you can process them onto your equipment to raise the equipment’s stats. However, note that if the processing fails, you will lose all materials and the processed equipment might randomly lower in stats, or even break.

A breeder’s Capture skill is to catch magic pets. Beast Tamers by profession are unable to catch magic pets. Although they depend on magic pets in battle, the only way they can obtain magic pets is through

purchasing them. Of course, if players have both the main profession and the job like you, they will not need to buy the magic pets separately. The Capture skill can not be used negligently. Although all monsters in <Zero> can, in theory, become magic pets, but if the monster that's caught is too high leveled, you will only get counter attacked and killed.

I also need to remind you, the captured targets can only become magic pets. The servant familiars that a Beast Tamer controls are spirits of deceased magic pets, and not the magic pets themselves. To get a servant familiar, you will first need to kill a magic pet, then use the Capture skill on it. You have to act fast, because thirty seconds after a magic pet dies, it will be gone, and it can not be captured as a servant familiar anymore. Rear is a more long term skill, and it is mainly through appropriately matching the pet with its food and training to make it more powerful. An appraiser's Identify is used for comparison. With this skill, you can automatically recognise an equipment's stats. This skill can be used on monsters as well as other players. There is a certain probability that you will be able to read out their names and all their stats. Meanwhile, the skill Familiarise is a little more special. It is to increase a weapon's attack strength. For example, if a weapon has a hidden property that makes it hit for double its firepower, then a person with the Familiarise skill will be able to use that hidden double firepower property of that weapon, while those who do not have this skill will not be able to unlock this property.

Alright, the introductions are complete. If you have any more questions later on, you can come ask me as well."

"Thank you! I'll definitely return again. The next time I come, I'll bring a box of cosmetics for you."

The elf beauty's smile grew more radiant. "Really? You can't be lying to

me!"

With great difficulty, I left the great hall. The elf beauty just now was clearly excessively passionate, could it be that this is the effect of high Charisma!

Haha! Now that I have so many skills, I definitely should not let them go to waste. I'll be going into the mountains in search of treasure.

Volume 2, Chapter 1 – Golden Sacred Dragon

Heavens! Why must you treat me this way?! I've already been going around this damned forest for an entire day! After getting my jobs authenticated yesterday, I'd rushed into the forest to mine in excitement, but found that I had, unfortunately, not prepared a Recall Scroll. Now, I can only either find my way back, or find a monster to kill me and then revive back at the city. But dying in <Zero> will cause a drop in levels, and every death would result in one level being lost. I don't want to fall in levels!

While thinking, I suddenly realised that the trees in front seemed to be rather spaced apart. This sort of situation normally only appears at the border of forests; could it be that I've found my way out?! I charged forward in excitement... I'm saved!

"Crash". I'd just rushed out of the forest when my head collided with something. Although the pain felt in <Zero> will be reflected by 50% before it reaches a level that endangers lives, I still felt like I had been run into by a container truck! There are so many stars in the sky! Why is the ground so uneven? It's making me slip and fall again right after I'd just stood up!

"Bzzz." A loud sound that sounded like it was released by a train engine saved me from my dizziness from the collision. Shaking my head, I realised that I was facing the forest. In my vertigo just now, I'd unconsciously turned to another direction. Hurriedly turning back, I withdrew my sword, preparing to teach whatever had knocked into me a lesson.

“Clang!” Everyone need not be surprised since that was the sound of my Novice Sword falling onto the ground. Would you like to know why even a warrior like me would actually drop my sword? See what I just saw and you’ll know.

“Dragon!!!!” I shrieked and drew back. This fellow in front of me was at least as long as a bus. Along with its movements, its white-blue scales reflected a ripple-like light. “Don’t...Don’t come over! I’m a warrior, I... I’m not scared of you!” While spouting lies even I myself didn’t dare to believe, I picked up my Novice Sword, though this thing seemed a little too unskilled to go against a dragon!

“Wuu! Wuuuu” This guy in front of me was actually letting out sounds that resembled a terrified puppy’s.

I kept retreating back to the forest until my back hit a large tree. The fellow in front of me still hadn’t attacked me, it had only continued to stare at me incessantly while mewling. Gradually, my brain recovered to a state where I could think. Thinking carefully, I recalled that even though <Zero> had over ten billion monsters, there were in-depth introductions to the few strongest ones on the website, and I seemed to have seen the introduction regarding dragons.

Carefully, I recalled the introductions regarding dragons. Dragons are the strongest creatures in <Zero>, and are a type of level 1000 Boss. Fully grown dragons have an average body length that surpasses a hundred metres. They are also fluent in human speech, as well as the languages of each and every monster. Every fully grown dragon knows all the magic that are of the same attributes as it, as well as other unrelated magic that are not top-notch. Adult dragons’ physical attacks are averagely over 10000 points and have a 75% chance of bypassing defences, and even a newly-born young dragon can attack for 300 and above!

Thinking of this, I was both happy and sad. I was happy that this dragon in front of me which was around ten metre in body length and only knew how to snort was obviously a baby dragon, but sad that even if it was a baby dragon that didn't know magic, its physical attacks were more than 300. Let alone me, even a level 100 who was fully-equipped with the best items would definitely be finished in a few hits. He wouldn't even have the chance to regenerate HP!

Looks like I'm definitely dead today! Sigh! How am I so unlucky? Even the outrageous first place on the rankings is already level 54. Originally, I still had a chance of surpassing him, but now that I'm lost and killed once, my dream of becoming first has no hope of getting fulfilled!

Forget it, since I'm lost, and I'll have to be killed to return to the city, it doesn't matter who's the one that kills me. With this layer of enlightenment, I was no longer scared.

"Dragon bro, I don't have many things, these are the two Fire Dragon Beasts I've just killed (Level 18 small monsters) and had originally intended to leave for my supper (Even though not eating anything in <Zero> won't result in death from starvation, eating something can still hasten HP and MP regeneration for a certain amount of time, so it's somewhat considered a converted medicine), but I'll give them to you. As a tradeoff, you have to kill me later, and make it quick. Don't let me suffer in pain for half a day and not be able to finish me off in one bite!"

I threw the two Fire Dragon creatures over forcefully, and the little dragon swallowed both Fire Dragon monsters in a single gulp. Closing my eyes as I prepared to wait for my impending death, I suddenly felt my face turn ice-cold. Opening my eyes, I saw that it was actually licking at

my face.

Hey, hey, this chap seems like it doesn't intend to kill me.

Maybe I can make it bring me out of here! As I was thinking, the little dragon suddenly convulsed with an "Atchoo!". The scenery in front of my eyes suddenly became blurry, and my entire person was thrown into a large tree by a powerful impact, causing all the bones in my body to feel like they were going to fall apart. This guy actually sneezed at me! Which jerk designed this program? Aiyo... my waist! Damn it, only 3 points were left from my 930 HP! This damned thing is really also too perverted, almost instakilling me with a single sneeze. Dragons are strong, but they don't have to be strong to such a perverse extent! I was about to stand up, when I realised I'd been frozen up. Oh dear god, it can't be this way, can it?!

Honestly waiting for seven seconds, my freeze finally ended. This dragon is already so OP even when it's young, it's going to be crazy when it's grown up. Whoever wants such a magic pet must be happy even if he dies! Oh right! My brain suddenly flashed with insight. Since there's no point standing around and wasting time, why not I try to catch it! Hehe! Slowly walking up to the front of this "little guy", with a "Be good!", I suddenly used the Breeder skill on him — Capture.

The little dragon jerked its body and retreated a distance away, staring at me with hostility. So this was why the elf beauty had said that catching high leveled Bosses was not recommended — it was because using the Capture skill on them might agitate them! Since I'm not planning on living anymore now, I used the Capture skill on it yet again.

"Ding!" The system prompt sounded. "Player Zi Ri has successfully

caught the Ultra-Boss Ice Blood Dark Dragon King! Player Zi Ri has become the first person in this game to catch a magic pet, and will be accordingly rewarded with a treasure." With a ding, a ring fell with only the word "ring" displayed. Its model looked a little like it had come from that movie, The Lord of the Rings. The system sounded yet again. "Player Zi Ri has become the first player to defeat a level 1000 Boss, and will be rewarded with five skill points and a treasure." Ding, and another ring fell from above. However, this time, the model looked more special, it was of a bat that stood atop a black gem. The bat's eyes were inlaid with red gemstones that shone with a mesmerising force.

These skill points were really good stuff. They were different from stat points in that stat points were for basic attacks and defense, but skill points could be used to upgrade skills. Under normal circumstances, players who wished to upgrade their skills had to frequently use these skills and these skills would rise in levels according to the experience accumulated. Each skill could only rise to a maximum of level 100. Every player that has surpassed level 20 will also be able to receive a skill point with every ten levels that they gain. Each skill point will allow a skill to rise by one level. This time, I've gained five skill points in one go. I'm really too blessed! Considering that I had not come by these five skill points easily, it was still better to leave them to level up skills that were hard to level in future!

The system prompt still continued.

"Player Zi Ri's Capture skill has risen to level 2.

Player Zi Ri's Capture skill has risen to level 3.

Player Zi Ri's Capture skill has risen to ...

Player Zi Ri's Capture skill has risen to level 13."

Haha! Haha! I've struck gold this time! While laughing crazily, I suddenly realised that my precious dragon was gone. Rushing around hurriedly to look for it, I found a white ball! Wait up, could this be a dragon egg? I hugged the egg for a long, long time to see what would happen, yet nothing resulted of it. Finally, I gave up studying it and decided to keep the dragon egg back in my inventory.

Just sitting around was simply too boring, so I began to study my surroundings. The surroundings was just empty land and behind, there was a cliff. I rushed up to it, and realised that above the cliff, there was a large cave. This must be a dragon cave! Hehe! Legends tell that dragons have a habit of collecting gold and loot, maybe here....!

All the way, I rushed madly into the depths of the dragon cave. Haha, there really is stuff here. Heavens... What are all these! Damn, they're all trash that aren't even much stronger than my beginner's equipment. I suppose they haven't gathered much treasure yet since the game has just started! After rummaging through for a long while, I found a White one-handed heavy sword that attacked for 5-10 (Equipment in <Zero> are categorised according to their grade. In sequence, they are White equipment, Special equipment, Gold equipment, Elite equipment, Holy equipment and God tools); black, iron armor that had 9 Defense, which was also White equipment; a Special equipment, Glory Leg Protectors that gave 4 to Defense, and had the property of increasing moving speed by 5%; a pair of leather boots that added 1 to Speed which was pretty good; a pair of arm protectors that had Defense 2 and bore the property of adding 5% to attack speed; and lastly, a shield that had 7 Defense and gave a 25% chance of blocking attacks. Although their properties were all not very good, they were already considered not bad, since everyone is

still wearing beginner equipment.

After emerging from the dragon's cave, I suddenly remembered that the system seemed to have some sort of assistance function. Quickly opening the chat function, I found that assistance was the first selection. After selecting it, a sound that sounded like I was using the phone instantly rang by my ear. "Hello! This is the customer service assistance system, phone operator number 2237 at your service!"

"Hello! I'd like to make an enquiry. I've just captured a pet, but it had suddenly disappeared!"

"May I ask if you see a white egg anywhere nearby?"

"Egg? Oh! Right! I did find a white ball near the place I'd lost it!"

"That's the pet egg! In the game, all magic pets will instantly fall to level 0 and become a pet egg the moment they are caught, and players only need to drip their blood onto the egg to complete the owner recognition ceremony. Of course, you can also sell it. A pet that has recognised its owner will hatch straight away, and after being born, it will automatically rise by one level. After which, a pet which fights in battles with its player will rise in levels until it reaches the level limit. Additionally, each pet's level limit is different. Of course, each pet has a certain probability of surpassing its original level limit, but this sort of probability is very low. This chance of success will depend on the player's luck value. Please note that once a magic pet recognises its owner, it can no longer be replaced, so please do not carry the notion of getting a pet for a single use. When a magic pet dies in battle, it will automatically revive, but it can not be summoned again for the next twenty minutes. Magic pets will also fall in level when they die.

“I understand now. Thank you!” Now I know it’s a ownerless pet egg, and that it can either be sold or used. But need this even be thought through? To sell it would merely be a single instance of transaction, but if I keep it to help me train, wouldn’t that make gold coins fill the sky! “I’d like to confirm and make it my own pet.”

Cutting my finger open with the Novice Sword, I dripped the blood onto the pet egg, and the system prompt instantly sounded. “Player Zi Ri confirms the recovery of the magic pet. Please give it a name.”

“Name?” I thought through it carefully. He has already given me so many benefits within such a short period of time, so he will definitely be an unrivaled lucky star. “Luck! Let it be called Luck!” Hopefully, he’ll bring me more pleasant surprises in future.

“Player confirmation success. Player Zi Ri is now in possession of the magic pet Dark Magic Dragon King, Luck.”

Crack! The egg in my hand began to split open, and a small, dark-headed thing crawled out. After it saw me, it immediately crawled onto me and rubbed affectionately at my face.

Haha! The next time I go out for a stroll with my dragon, the chances of making it back is an absolute hundred percent! Haha! Haha! The more I thought about it, the happier I got. However, why is it black? It was clearly blue when we were outside just now! Could it have turned black because of my profession? Who cares, in any case, black is still pretty handsome! Oh right, it seems like I still haven’t seen Luck’s stats! I conjured Luck’s status box.

ATK: 100-200 DEF: 150 SPD: 200 HP: 1500 MP: ∞

There was still another notable box beneath.

Defense aside, HP regeneration is increased by 10 points per second

25% chance that attacks will bring about a 7 second freeze

Magic resists 75%

Fuck, such perverted stats... Even though I'm such a lucky bastard to have caught one, my main priority will still be to walk around a dragon when I see one in future! High attacks, high defenses and high magic resists, HP regeneration is so fast too. From now on, I should establish an equation in my mind: Dragon = Dangerous Creatures = Death = Drop in levels and equipment. However, looking at Luck's height that was currently less than even a third of a metre, it really was mismatched with its stats!

While looking, I suddenly realised that Luck actually had an inventory as well. Could it be that it had equipment too? I shouted at the sky, "Luck's equipment inventory."

Sure enough, an interface floated out. He actually had a headband as well as a necklace! I quickly looked at its stats. The necklace was the Protection Collar I had been awarded, and the headband was named Dragon King Head Ornament, and there was only a line of words for its stats, which were: Doubles the dragon's attack and defense.

Bite me. Could it really be that Luck is a dragon king? Continuing, I

looked below. Luck actually had a 300 slot inventory space that had no weight limit, while my inventory space was only 120! Hehe! From now on, Luck will be my transportation vehicle!

Suddenly remembering that I had been rewarded with two rings, I took them out to take a look. The black ring had a completely unadorned band design. After using a number of Identify on it until I had used up all my MP, my Identify skill had risen to level 4, but I was still unable to Identify the ring. There was nothing to be done about it, I'll let Luck lead me out of the forest first. Even though it had become smaller, its intelligence did not seem to have declined. As I walked, I waited for my MP to regenerate. In any case, as I get enough MP for Identify, I'll use it once.

When we had finally left the forest successfully, I had also finally Identified the ring. The ring instantly changed from black to dark red. The ring was called Hermit's Ring, and it added 1 to Luck. It also had two other properties, one of which increased the special attribute Wisdom. Because this was an equipment based skill, Wisdom's level could not be raised. Looking at the explanation, it seems that this so-called Wisdom could increase experience gained by 5%. It's a high quality item! (Both my eyes had become ¥ shaped) The other property was that it removed the player's as well as all the player's equipped weapons' listings from the ranking chart. The players' magic pets were also removed from the magic pet rankings. No wonder it was called the Hermit's Ring, it concealed so well. Lastly, if a player wore this ring, no matter how high level others' Identify skills were, they would be unable to see that player's stats. Moreover, this ring had no prerequisites for equipping, and a player of any profession can wear it. Hehe! There's really a feeling of being above everyone else in the world! What a pity that the other ring still could not be Identified successfully!

TL Note:

Special Equipment (属性装备) translated literally would be Property or Attribute Equipment. Presumably, this means that the equipment in this rank will begin to have special properties.

Volume 2, Chapter 2 – The Lost City

After walking out of the forest, I felt as if I had been given a new lease of life. Gulping in a few breaths of air, I decided to first return to Cold Jade to replenish my medicaments. As far as the eye can see..... Wait up! What is this! Where has Cold Jade gone to?

What was before my eyes was not the beautiful large grass plain in front of Cold Jade, but rather, a massive expanse of graves that stretched on for a dozen kilometres. Beneath the ash grey sky were gravestones of the defeated as well as weeds growing in wild abandon everywhere. What is this bloody place, exactly? Fortunately, ahead was a majestic... I don't know whether to call it a fort or a city. It's a little too large to be a stronghold. Although I'm unable to see the full view from such a great distance away, but from a visual estimate, its area seemed to be more than thrice as large as Cold Jade. But to call it a city, it's actually built on a huge island in the middle of a lake, and its only connection to the outside world is through a stone bridge of over three kilometres.

Forcefully shaking my head to pull myself out of my confusion, I plucked up my courage and headed towards the city. No matter what it is, I'll know for myself once I take a look!

This messy graveyard's surface area is extremely large, so if there really are people buried underneath, there would be approximately millions of them there. Luckily, this is a game, so fatigue would not be a problem. Besides, the field of vision here is very wide, so I won't get lost easily. All the way, shattered steles and bones were scattered across the grounds, and every now and then, skulls could be spotted as well. The entire area reminds me of the cemetery in the game 'Unequaled Hero' I had once played. What exactly was China Company thinking, making this

enormous gravesite?!

With great difficulty, I reached the long bridge, but only now did I realise that the stone bridge wasn't as short as it had seemed from afar. In reality, it's more than five kilometres long. Looking at this lake, it seems to be very problematic as well. The massive lake surface is tranquil and undisturbed, and it looks like it has a viscous feel to it. Also, the entire lake is pitch black, and a couple of bubbles would surface occasionally. Fortunately, it did not seem to emit any strange smell.

Just as I was looking at the lake, considering if I should cross, Luck suddenly flew out of my arms to sneeze at the lake's surface. It looked as if it was trying to spurt dragon flames, but it was a pity that it was too young, so it did not have the skill for the time being.

Looking in Luck's direction, a chain of enormous bubbles suddenly erupted from the far-off lake surface. Following which, a fin that was covered all over in sharp spikes appeared from the depths of the lake. The part of the fin that had appeared above water was over twenty metres, and it was extremely obvious, even just from the imagination, what size its owner is. Fortunately, it doesn't seem to be rushing at me! Not far away, another larger fin emerged above the liquid's surface, and the two fellows seem to be about to fight.

Just as expected, the two fins sped up and rushed at each other. With a rumble, a stream of water soared, bringing with it a hideous mass of things while scaring me half to death. Because some random unknown things were tossed at my leg, I fell wretchedly. Just as I was raising my head, Whoosh! a long sword stabbed directly into my arm. I couldn't help shrieking miserably as blood gushed forth instantly. Bearing the pain, I pulled the sword out as blood continued to flow from the wound. Watching my HP fall madly, I drank my last remaining bottle of red at

once, and with a red flash, my wound finally stopped bleeding.

Damn it! How am I so unlucky?! Even getting smashed by stuff just from watching monsters fight! Immediately after I'd just crawled up, another 'dong' followed closely as a heavy shield crashed onto my head, causing me to stagger and almost fall. Heavens! Who did I even piss off?! Hurriedly picking up the shield, I held it over my head and ran wildly into the forest. All the way, all sorts of unknown items kept smashing onto the shield with clanking sounds, and the vibrations from those almost caused my arms to go numb.

Seeing that I was about to reach the edge of the forest, I suddenly found myself being covered by a black shadow. What is this?! Carefully peeking my head out from under the shield, I looked up at the sky. It would have been better if I hadn't looked, because when I'd looked, I was scared almost half to death. A gigantic eel which had a body length of over a hundred metres was currently falling from the sky. And of all places it could fall at, it somehow seemed to be falling right onto the area where I was.

Almost instinctively, I sat onto the ground and raised my longsword towards the sky. I could only feel my hands sink and after which, I didn't know anything anymore.

A short wave of icy cold on my face woke me up, and as it turned out, Luck had been licking my face. Feeling around my body, it seemed like nothing much had happened, but upon careful examination, it seems like I've been buried. As for what was pressing on me, it was a no-brainer that it had to be that wretched big eel. But luckily, one end of my sword was supported on the ground, while the other end was holding up this fellow, so a little space was still maintained.

I was just thinking over how to get out, when suddenly, white light flashed from above and the eel suddenly disappeared. With a clang, the sword that I had just taken hold of was broken into two. The system prompt sounded,

“Player Zi Ri has leveled up to level 25.

Player Zi Ri has leveled up to level 26.

Player Zi Ri has leveled up to level 27.

Player Zi Ri has leveled up to level 28.

Player Zi Ri has leveled up to level 29.”

“What? Even this is okay?!” Is this system even legit?! But then again, who would willingly give up free experience? What a pity that this monster is only higher leveled and not some sort of Boss, or else I’d have gotten a reward or something of that sort!

I was still rejoicing when I suddenly thought of my sword. I quickly picked up the remains of my sword. Ah! It’s been broken into two segments! Even though this thing wasn’t really of any use, but it’s still the only weapon I’d had. Now that it’s broken, how am I supposed to train?! I really regret throwing my Novice Sword away then!

Suddenly, I felt something cool on my hand. Isn’t this the heavy sword

that had just been thrown at me?! Hehe! Heaven never bars one's ways! Within an incredibly short amount of time, my emotions swung from one extreme to the other, because I'd just found that this accursed sword was unequippable. My stat points at level 29 are: STR 377, AGI 174, INT 58, ENERGY 87 and CONT 232. However, this wretched sword actually requires level 30, STR 300, AGI 160 as well as CONT 150. Ah! Why! Why can't it be equipped!

I rummaged around on the ground nearby. Just now, when that fish had exploded, seventeen gold coins as well as something that was either a pearl or a fish eye had been dropped. What a pity that it couldn't be identified. In my surroundings, there were also many items scattered around that had been brought up from beneath the water depths. However, most of them were ruined and I could only keep a total of three of those. One of them was the shield that had just smashed into me, which when used the Identify skill on, turned out to be called Cache Shield and was classified as a large shield. Thankfully, it was equippable. Its stats were Defense 75, 35% Block chance and 10% Damage Rebound. The other was a pair of leg protectors that were named Darkness Guard. Its stats were Defense 80, 10% Lightning Absorption, 10% Darkness damage Absorption, 5% Increase in moving speed. It was a pity that it had a 37 level requirement and was thus temporarily unusable. The last would be that broken sword that can't be reused! I'll first throw the unusable ones into my bag, since I can exchange them for some items after selling!

As I considered the fact that more monsters could be lying in the lake's murky depths, I inched forward onto the bridge while sucking in my breath. Lord knows which monster will suddenly emerge from the water to finish me off! Extremely scared and on edge, I ran to the end of the bridge, where the gates of the city stood awe-inspiringly before me. At 18 metres tall and 7 metres wide, the thickset city gates, which were made fully of stone, looked extremely majestic. Above the door, the two words

“Lost City” that were written in black made waves of fear pass through a people’s hearts when they see it.

Only after hurriedly rushing into the city did I realise that what was inside would made people feel even more on edge. The entire city was a stretch of desolation, and it wasn’t because the houses were ruined or anything of that sort. Rather, the architecture in this entire city were exceptionally grand. All the houses were built from black stone, and thus they looked extraordinarily stable. However, it was really scary to look at the large stretch of black buildings under this dark sky!

“Is.... Is there anyone?” I cleared my throat and shouted, but because of fear, my voice shook immensely.

With a clatter, two black longswords were pointed at my neck from both sides. “In the ghost country, alive creatures may not trespass! Leave now!” The one who spoke was a Knight all clad in black, and surrounding him were four followers who were black from head to toe as well. Even their saddled horses were completely covered in black armor. The Knight who is speaking is obviously their leader, as a long red feather is stuck on his helmet.

I was baffled that players were already in such amazing equipment so early into the game. Casting the Identify skill, I got scared almost half to death. That leader was the captain of a hundred strong troop of knights known as the Mythal Knight Troop. He was a level 250 Dark Knight, and the rest of his stats were unidentifiable. The four followers beside him were Mythal Knights, leveled 200. They specialised in group assault and intimidation, and the rest couldn’t be identified anymore either! So it turned out that they’re NPCs. No wonder they’re so vicious!

Seeing that I'd made no response, a knight brandished his sword and was about to chop down onto me. Frightened, I shut my eyes, but the sword did not descend as I'd expected. Peeking my eyes open, I saw that Luck was currently blocking in front of me while raining blows onto the Knight with its tiny wings and shrieking incessantly at it. However, what was completely beyond my expectations was that the five Knights instantly vaulted off their horses, and the leading Knight spoke. "We did not know it was Lord Black Dragon King, excuse us!"

Luck continued to flap its small wings while shouting crazily at the Knights, yet the Knights replied respectfully, "Yes! We understand!" Following which, the five Knights turned back once again and they immediately rushed back into the city. Luck turned around and cried out gladly towards me and I also patted it to express my happiness.

Now that I'd shaken off the five Knights, I began walking towards the city. After all, Luck seemed to be very respected over here!

Volume 2, Chapter 3 – Company Announcement

After walking around for three entire hours, I saw that the skies were already darkening, yet I still had not bought even a single medicinal pill or a single piece of equipment. The problem didn't lie in finding a shop, but rather, in that all shops were already closed. After those five Knights had left, I hadn't come into contact with a single person. The entire city's area was humongous, and its innumerable criss-crossing streets left a person with no navigational skills like me disoriented.

Unable to continue on anymore, I could only find a small alley to log off at. Removing my headgear, I saw that Ah Wei was currently sitting by the computer and using the internet. "What are you looking at?"

Seeing that I had come to, Ah Wei waved at me excitedly. "Come look, quick. This is <Zero>'s official website!"

"Oh? And what does it have?"

"The game's ranking chart and a few announcements." Ah Wei explained this to me while looking through the table of contents.

"Is there any important news?"

"Wait a little, I think I just saw a few articles a moment ago. Oh, I've found them!" I quickly ran behind Ah Wei and looked at the announcement he had selected. "China Company says that ten thousand and one hundred accounts have been handed out in reality today. The players who have received their accounts today are the first batch of

official players. All who were amongst the ten thousand and one hundred accounts that were given out were given a chance to randomly draw a reward count, the largest of which is 4 and the smallest would be 0." Upon reading this, Ah Wei turned back to look at me in surprise. "Drawing nothing is still possible? I'd thought everyone would get prizes! How many did you draw?"

With my hands, I made a victory pose and smiled at him. "I, your boss, the naturally unrivalled lucky star have drawn 4 items! Hahaha! Impressive, eh!"

"So awesome! Okay, after I get my account, I'll be depending on you for all my equipment!"

At this, my face instantly fell. "I'll try my best!"

Sensing from my expression that there was something amiss, Ah Wei asked nervously, "What's wrong? Did someone kill you?"

"It would have been better if someone had killed me!" I sat down beside the bed. "I don't even know what's wrong with my luck, that it made me run into two NPC monsters fighting. Of all the stupid things that could happen, one of those monsters flew onto me. And in that emergency situation, I blocked it using my sword, and now it's broken!"

"What? You can't have broken your one and only Novice Weapon, right?"

"Hey! Don't talk about it anymore! I'd originally picked up a White

equipment sword from the forest. Although its attack is so-so, it was still better than the Novice Sword the system had given. Plus, recycling Novice Weapons can only get me a single copper coin, and it takes up space as well, so I'd discarded that Novice Weapon right away. Who would've thought that my one and only weapon would be gone now!

"Boss! Then how will you train now that you have no weapon?"

"I'm also worried as well. Before I logged off, I'd originally went into a city, wanting to find a shop where I could buy the cheapest one to manage for the time being, but not a single shop was open in that strange city!"

"Forget it! There's nothing to get upset over, you only need to spend some time to find a shop and it'll be fine!" Ah Wei turned back to look at the webpage and he continued to read aloud. "Boss, you're really lucky! On this, it says that out of all the accounts today, 5307 people drew zero prize items, so in actual fact, only 4307 people won prizes."

"It can't be! So many people got zero?"

"Yes, China Company said that the success rate in drawing prizes is scaled accordingly. Therefore, the probability of drawing a zero is the highest, and the higher the value, the harder it is to get!"

"Then are the numbers for the other values mentioned?"

"Yes! There were 3797 who drew one item, 792 who drew two, 203 who drew three, and the number of people who drew four items is only....."

What! The only person who drew four prizes is you! Boss, you're so extreme, within the entire world, there's only one person, and you actually got it! My admiration towards you is like a torrential river! It won't stop!"

"Is this for real!" I was also shocked. I'd originally thought that at least a few hundred others had drawn four items as well! "What other stuff does it say below?"

Ah Wei continued to read aloud. "Currently, the first place in game goes to a warrior called Big Swords Kill Many Men who is already level 68." Ah Wei paused.

"What's wrong?"

"I just saw something interesting."

"What's interesting?"

"The second ranked is a female player named Hong Yue (lit. Red Moon). She's a dark mage and has actually already reached level 67! I really don't get how she trains so fast, aren't mages supposed to be really difficult to train in the beginning!"

Hearing the ranks of all these outrageous individuals made me feel all the more unconfident. "Sigh! I'm only level 29, but they're all already over level 60 and already more than two times my level! How am I supposed to catch up!"

"Don't lose heart, boss, you're bound to catch up!" Ah Wei tried talking

me round while looking up interesting or useful information. "Over here, it says that in the entire game, there are already 7 magic pets! The highest ranked belongs to that female dark mage, and the pet is named Mi Wu (lit. Dense Fog). It's an originally level 800 Boss Mutated Night Spirit King that's currently level 38. No wonder that mage leveled so fast, turns out it's because she has this amazing treasure!"

That's weird! My Luck is clearly a level 1000 Boss, so why is it not first? Although it's only level 1, there's still no reason why it wouldn't be first! Could it be due to that hermit's ring? "What other magic pets are there below?"

"Below!" Ah Wei looked. "The rest are all junk. The second ranked is only a level 80 Boss Wild Horse King which is currently level 21."

Looks like it's the work of that ring! Seeing that Ah Wei was looking at me, I waved. "The rest below!"

Ah Wei continued. "The game is currently going to begin to enter an official releasing of control. As such, all control exercised will be handed over to the system to handle and the company will no longer intervene in all assignments produced, events that happen as well as all NPC activity. All the responsibility will be handed over to China Company's super-computers. The company will no longer set personnel in the game as GMs or anything of that sort, so the game will become completely automated."

"Are they for real! Isn't this too extreme! What exactly are they trying to do?"

“It says above that this is all done to test the system AI’s emergency processing capability!”

“This is still understandable!” I listened to Ah Wei talk about the news, while eating some junk food I had dug out from the fridge. “Is there still any other important news?”

“China Company says that at 8 in the morning tomorrow, they will release the second batch of accounts which total to a hundred thousand. After another day, they will completely let go of account restrictions. By then, there will no longer be a need to apply for an account anymore. Throughout the world, everyone’s IC number will be their account number. (Right now, the entire world’s IC numbers are common. The first three numbers represent the country, while the numbers behind will be according to each country’s own arrangements. No matter where a person goes, as long as their IC is with them, they will have absolutely nothing to worry about as their IC is bound to their bank account.) However, the IC number is longer, so it’ll be slightly more inconvenient. There’s nothing more after that. The website mentions that all new information will be promptly updated on the website and will also be announced in-game.”

“Then, okay. I got it. I’ll go take a rest for a while first!”

Chapter 4 – NPC Friends

Waking up from my nap I quickly check the time, which was exactly midnight. I had something to eat, went to the toilet and got ready to log back into the game. After a flash of white light, I reappeared in the alley where I logged off. Weird, when did it become so noisy! I looked around... No way!

You absolutely will know believe what I saw! "Ghosts!" In front of me was a kind looking Old Man with a hair full of white. His body was actually translucent and he didn't even have legs, instead, below his waist were floating puffs of something that looked similar to clouds.

"Huh? Kid, how did you get here?" The Old Man, no rather, old ghost floated over in my direction.

I shook my head in order to calm down, this was a game, it should be normal for ghosts to appear in games. With this mindset, I was no longer afraid. "I was lost and ended up here, I came in the morning but there was nothing so I logged off, I only just logged on."

The Old Man floated closer to my face, "You really are a visitor! We have not had a living being here for so long!"

Feeling that the Old Man was quite friendly, I felt relieved, "Why doesn't anyone come here?"

"Sigh" the Old Man sighed, "Since you already know that i'm an undead, you can probably guess where this place is."

“This place should be where spirits and ghosts go to rest?” I asked tentatively

“That’s incorrect but you’re quite close!” The old man turned around and started pulled me out of the alley. The road outside had already been filled with many people... or ghosts to be precise. Looking at it now, this place now seems to be a lively city. “This place is a gathering place for dead souls, but it is not a resting ground. You should have also seen the city name on the gates!”

“It’s called the Lost City right?”

“Correct! This is place for those who have perished but are unwilling to rest, we are all lost souls!” said the Old Man while looking quite sad.

I immediately tried to comfort him, “You shouldn’t be too sad, this place is quite nice!”

The Old Man’s expression suddenly changed, “Forget it, let’s not mention these depressing things, follow me.” The Old Man then started leading the way while flying towards his destination, I had nothing better to do than follow him. Despite looking like my grandfather, he flew very fast. Sprinting all the way, I couldn’t even catch my breath. The place where the old man stopped was unexpectedly a huge plaza. The old man ran towards a stage and signaled me to come up. After I got up, the old man started yelling: “Everyone gather around! We have a living friend here!”

The Old Man took me by surprise, he was way too excited! What’s

worse, I was surrounded by a large crowd of demons and ghosts. After using my appraising technique, I nearly screamed "Oh my God!". There was a level 130 Undead Spirit, level 200 Goblin Spirit, level 320 Goblin Soul, level 150 Dullahan Spirit, and level 350 Undead Spellblade Soul. It was a mess of every single race, truly a monster's paradise! Even more frightening, many dark type creatures started gathering around. I saw a dog with three heads as well as numerous devils! I could even see a Three-headed Hellhound in addition to a gigantic Dark Ghost.

The Old Man yelled towards them, "Can everyone see clearly? Beside me is a living friend. We haven't received a living person in so long! Everyone, let's celebrate!"

"Great! Welcome! Welcome!" I was in a daze! These monsters were quite lively and hospitable! Turns out I was wrong to make those judgements earlier! Looking at the monsters acting all crazy below, I didn't know what to do anymore!

As I stood there frozen, a muscular and tall Dark Warrior walked towards me, "Greetings, I'm Clark, the boss of this city's weapon shop. If you need any equipment in the future, you can look to my shop for business!"

"Aren't the shops here closed? Earlier, I walked around the city for a long time yet didn't see a single open store."

The Dark Warrior chuckled loudly, "Of course there won't be anyone around during daytime! This is the Lost City! There isn't anyone besides the guards from early 8 in the morning till 6 in the afternoon!"

"How did I not realize, you guys probably can't come in touch with

sunlight right?"

"It's not that we can't, but that we don't want to, that's all. Look at that tower." A tall and skinny man wearing a black robe walked behind me. This guy was really tall! Even though my 170cm height was quite average. The difference was so large that my head only reached his shoulder!

My sight followed where he was pointing with his hand. There was indeed a tower, it was quite square and looked similar to an obelisk. Although the tower looked black, it actually wasn't, instead the color was very dark grey. From my point of view, you could estimate that it was around 300 meters in height. The buildings beside it were at most about 100 meters high. It really stood out. At the top of the tower, there was a big diamond frame. Inside the frame was a red-orange pupil that gave off a feeling of oppression. But right now, the pupil was contracted into a vertical line since it was closed. I have no idea what would happen if it opens its eyes.

"That is the Dark Tower of the Lost City, the thing at the top is called the Hell's Eye. If the city were to be under attack or we were to attack neighbouring cities, it will awaken. When the Hell's Eye opens, all the Dark monsters of the city will no longer have to comply with the nocturnal rule and not only that, all Dark Creatures will gain a 50% bonus their Attack and Defenses."

"No way, so powerful! Wouldn't you guys be invincible then!"

The shady robed man laughed, "Although we wouldn't be invincible, we'd still be very strong. I still haven't introduced myself yet, I am the boss of the city's pharmacy, you can call me Medicine King! "

“Spirits also consume potions?” The system was really peculiar, all races had to use potions!

“Why can’t we use them! Let me tell you, my medicine is one of a kind in the entire continent, Not only is it extremely effective but it’s cheap and high quality as well! If you ever visit my shop, i’ll give you a 20% discount!”

Not long after, I was surrounded by a crowd of NPCs telling me about the stores they owned. They all told me they would also give me a 20% discount if I were to visit their shops. With no choice, I could only visit them all. Following the order in which they spoke to me, I followed Clark to his weapon shop. After walking passed several streets, we arrived at his shop. I had actually passed by here in the morning but it was closed at the time.

“How is it, my shop is pretty good isn’t it!” Clark proudly exclaimed.

I surveyed the shop, this was a very big weapons store. The walls and floor covered with wooden decorations, there were also a bunch of NPCs currently selling and buying things at the counter. It really did give off an atmosphere of a large shop. “Not bad! It looks splendid!”

After hearing me praise his shop, Clark was even more ecstatic. “How is it! Do you want to buy anything?”

“I’ll definitely buy something! My weapon broke yesterday and I only have equipment I can’t use yet, so I would need a practical weapon!”

Seeing that I was embarrassed, Clark then said: "No problem, if you don't have enough money, you can owe me for the time being."

"I can't accept that!" I put all the unequippable items on the counter and organized them in columns. "Take these, I also have three pieces gold coins. If it's not enough, then I'll have to owe you and return it to you in the future!"

Clark took a look at the equipment that I took out: "These items are worth around 13 gold in total and with the three gold you have, that makes a total of 16 gold. Then it's settled, come and follow me!"

Chapter 5 – Buying

Following Clark to the second floor of the shop, there was a small business room. After inviting me to sit down, Clark ran to another room, not long after, he returned with a blood red longsword in his hand. Placing the sword in front me. " This is a sword I made when I just finished my apprenticeship, take a look and see if you can use it."

I carefully took the sword to inspect. This model of the sword was standard without any special adornments, thus making it look very ordinary. Although I don't know why it was giving off a flickering blood red glow, I took a look at the attributes of the sword.

Soulbound Vampiric Longsword

Attack: 25-40	Attack Speed: Fast	Lifesteal: 15%	Agility: +1
Knockback: 1%	Req. Lv: 29	Req. Str: 370	Req. Agi: 170

This was a really amazing weapon! Especially the attack speed and lifesteal bonus. <Zero>'s weapon attack speed was classified into five grades. The best was Faster, then Fast , followed by Normal, Slow and lastly, Slower. The majority of short weapons generally had a Normal grade attack speed while longer weapons would have a Slow grade attack speed. You rarely saw a Fast graded weapon let alone a Faster grade! Not only did this longsword have Fast attack speed, but it also had a Lifesteal effect with a surprisingly large percentage. This sword was really a treasure for warriors! Fearing that the level cap was too high for me, I quickly checked the requirements. Haha! My current level was 29, Strength was $13 \times 29 = 377$ and Agility was $6 \times 29 = 174$. Barely having the stats to equip it, extremely lucky!

Clark saw me standing there motionless for a long time while looking at the equipment thinking that I could not equip the weapon, so he comforted me. "Purple Sun Brother (We already knew each other from our exchange outside earlier, who said my character's charisma wasn't high), if you can't equip it don't feel too hurt! This is the sword that I unintentionally crafted successfully. Although the stats are not bad, it's a pity that the requirements are too high for low level people to use. High level people who want better attack damage and are able equip don't even bother since there are much better alternatives, thus this sword is redundant. I kept it as a memento to remind myself of my first successful work!"

I was focusing so hard on the sword that I forgot to answer Clark, I hurriedly replied, "Oh no, that's not it! I can equip it, this is great! How much does it cost?"

When Clark heard that I could equip it, he happily said, " Keeping it here has no use for me, I'll just take 7 gold coins from you... Here is the 6 gold I still owe you.

I didn't reject him, I was dirt poor and still needed to buy potions! Furthermore, Clark was not a fussy person, and probably wanted to care for future business.

Equipping the sword, I took out the shield I found outside the city. Looking at my character, although I looked like a mess with different varieties of equipment that looked somewhat out of place, at least my whole body was equipped. While I was feeling good about myself, Clark rebutted: "What kind of crap are you wearing! Black, white, red, look at how messy you look!"

“What’s wrong? It’s not bad! At least I have completely filled up the necessary basic equip slots!”

“You call this complete? Where’s your helmet? Shoulder pads? You don’t even have bracers! You’re missing a belt, faulds, a clock and you only have one ring! (In , you’re technically able to equip up to ten rings, but only the index finger, middle finger and ring finger of both hands can have effects. The rest are for decoration!)”

(TLN: Took me awhile to translate this piece of armour: Faulds)

Hearing him talk to this point, I countered, “I have another ring but it hasn’t been appraised yet!”

“Okay, even if you have 2 rings, you are still missing 4! Furthermore, you are lacking an amulet and bracelets. You can only have two bracelets but they give a lot of bonus attributes! Head ornament, do you have one?”

At first I was quite satisfied with my equips, but being told off by him, I now felt that I was as poorly equipped as a beggar!”

“Forget it! Even if lose money, I need to equip you, otherwise you will soil my reputation when the other customers see you leaving my store! Come, take everything off, I will take a look and see what I can do!” saying that, Clark came to help me change my clothes.

I quickly moved away! “No,no,no! How can I let you lose money, I will come back and buy better equipment when I level up!”

Clark thought about it and then nodded his head, "You're right, since you are low leveled right now, you will level up very fast. Having to replace your equipment when you outlevel them is very troublesome. Send me your basic stats right now and I'll prepare a level 200 Dark Knight set for you. Although your level cap is 1000, after level 200, each level up will become much steadier and slower. Right now you need to level as fast as you can!"

"Alright then, thanks a bunch." While expressing my thanks, I sent a copy of my attribute points to Clark.

Right after leaving Clark's shop, I was swept away like a gust of wind by Medicine King who was lurking at the side of the door. I couldn't see where his strength came from on skinny body! Arriving at Medicine King's store his store was actually not far off from Clark's, separated by only a few stores.

With a grin on his face, Medicine King brought me a bunch of potions, "Hehe, let me introduce you to these pills." He held up a dark black pellet. "This is called the Undead Pellet, although it is black, it's effects are quite good!"

"What use does it have?"

"It's main purpose is to replenish blood. Each potion restores 500 HP and regenerates health twice as fast as normal Red Potions. What do you think, it's good right?"

"Is it expensive?" I firmly believed that quality goods would not be cheap or there might be something dishonest going on.

“Expensive? Of course not, if it was why, would I call it a bargain! Each pouch goes for one gold coin.”

“What? Are you robbing me!” With a leap, I rushed towards the entrance.

Medicine King ended up pulling back with his higher speed. “Don’t be in such a rush! Listen to my explanation first, then you’ll realise that it’s not expensive.”

“Alright, speak!”

“Alright! The first thing I want to say is that each pouch contains 10 pellets. This means each pellet will cost you 1 silver coin. Buying a Greater Red Potion elsewhere will also cost you 1 silver but it will only restore 300HP and regenerate your health at half the speed. So do you still think it is expensive?”

When I thought about it, it wasn’t expensive at all, rather it was quite cheap! “Not expensive, not expensive!”

After hearing me say it was not expensive, Medicine King became even more excited, he immediately brought out a large stack of Undead Potions and then said, “For a one-time purchase, if you buy 10 pouches right now, i’ll throw in an extra for free. How about it?”

“Unfortunately I only have 9 gold coins!”

“No problem! I told you I’d offer a 20% discount., you just need to pay me 8 Gold Coins for the 11 pouches!”

“Thank you so much!” I was so happy I nearly forgot to jump for joy!

Chapter 6 – Leveling up! Leveling up!

After receiving the potions and leaving Medicine King's shop, I immediately headed out of the city, watch out monsters, here I come! I first looked at the current rankings leaderboard. The style had changed a bit as a few more stats were included now.

Ranking Leaderboard

Rank	Name	Pet	Race	Sex	Level	Job
1	A Big Knife Kills More	Level 11 Mustang King	Half-orc	M	Level 71	Warrior
2	Heartless Autumn Wind	None	Angel	M	Level 70	Warrior
3	Red Moon	None	Demon	F	Level 70	Shadowblade
			Level 38 Nightspirit King			
4	I Love Money	None	Devil	F	Level 69	Priest
5	Skyfire	None	Human	M	Level 69	Spellblade
6	Not Dating	None	Gnome	M	Level 69	Thief + Shadowblade
7	Descended Deity	None	Angel	M	Level 69	Warrior
8	Sunlight	None	Half-elf	M	Level 68	Bowman
9	Gentle as Water	None	Half-elf	F	Level 68	Bowman

10	Tyrannosaurus	Half-orc	M	Level 68	Warrior
	None				

Seeing the levels of others and then looking at my own pitiful level of 29 was depressing. I took out the leveling map Medicine King had forced upon me as I left his shop, it was actually really useful! This wasn't your ordinary map, the map showed where the Lost City was and all of its surrounding areas. It even listed the top mobs to level with, what level they were and their characteristics.

Following the route marked on the map, I made my way to the valley behind the Lost City. It took almost the whole morning to reach the mouth of the valley, along the way, I greeted the wife and families of those from the Lost City! Since the city only had one exit and was built on a lake, I was forced to run all the way around the lake to get to where I needed to go. When I get home, i'll have my mom curse out whoever designed this damn city!

According to the map, this valley was called the Dark Canyon and it was rumoured that all the spirits that did not want to reside within the Lost City ended up staying here. Medicine King had told me that the mob density here was high and they also respawned pretty fast. The most important fact was that the mobs level increased the further you ventured and due to the high level difference, it was the perfect place to level up.

I walked into the canyon alertly, after walking a mile, I still hadn't encountered anything. Could that feeble Medicine King have tricked me?

Walking further into the canyon, I discovered the flickering of a figure's shadow in the distance. Forging onwards, I found the shadow's origin. It's body looked like a corpse and the stench of it's decomposing body made you want to throw up. Did the developers have nothing better to do, but to make it so realistic. Putting on my leveling mentality, I ignored the stench and rushed up to him. Thinking about it, it was quite strange, I extremely loved grinding levels in games, but other people that played hated the grind. To me, grinding levels was very pleasurable.

I aimed at the Zombie and slashed at it, instantly killed? How's it so weak? Another one not too far away stumbled over, this time I used Identify to check it's stats. It only took one try to succeed, since my Identify was already level 4. The stats looked like this:

Rotting Zombie

Level 30 | Speed: Slow | Chance to Poison on hit

Weaknesses: Head

No wonder it was so easy to kill, it was only level 30. My character had abnormally high attack stats that would frighten people, that's why one-shotting monsters around the same level was to be expected.

I directed another slash towards the oncoming Zombie. It stopped for bit but didn't die, I quickly slashed at it again to kill it. Looks like my attack isn't high enough to guarantee one shots every time!

Soon after killing the two Zombies, a third one quickly appeared. Turned out Medicine King's map was accurate, this monster density and spawn times were perfect for solo leveling (Not taking into account the smell!). The Zombies took around one slash to kill, only 1 or 2 out of every

10 took 2 hits. After about two hours, I had already hit level 35, leveling here was so fast!

Considering my frightening attack damage, I started making my way deeper into the canyon, killing zombies on the way, while walking. A zombie appeared beside me, I slashed at it like usual but it didn't die. A second slash but it was still running towards me! I suddenly realised this was not an ordinary zombie, using Identify, different information appeared.

Zombie (It's not rotting)

Level 40 | Speed: Slow | Claws are highly poisonous

Weaknesses: Head

Turns out it was higher level, no wonder I couldn't kill it with 2 attacks! I ran behind it and attacked again. While watching him slowly turn around, I stuck behind him and kept attacking. It took 4-8 slashes until it finally died! A clinking sounded out as two silver coins dropped onto the ground! Haha, It gave a lot more money than those rotten ones!

After pushing forwards a considerable amount, I was quite tired, so I found a cliff and then logged off. Taking off the helmet, I glanced at the time... It was already 3 in the afternoon. Realizing Ah Wei wasn't home, I ate something, went to the toilet and then wore the helmet to continue! Upon logging in, I found myself being surrounded by a group of zombies, thirty feet away! Fortunately some had their backs facing me while some other ones were just wandering around. I casually slipped in between a few of them, getting away due to their slow reaction time.

While killing, I suddenly remembered that I should also help Lucky gain

a few levels. In the future, it'll be easy for it to help me level and PvP. With a thought, Lucky popped up in front of me, he then flew over into my embrace and gently rubbed against my shirt. "Lucky, you need to work hard and level now, or else no one will take you seriously with such a low level!" Come, let's take these ugly fellows out!"

It seemed that Lucky understood what I had said, it flew onto my shoulder, while its two little claws pinched my shoulder. Then it released a small ball of fire that flew towards the nearest zombie. Bang. A charred zombie appeared in front of me except it did not seem to have sustained any damage. Seeing that its fireball was not effective, Lucky pitifully lowered his head. I gently patted its little head, "Don't be sad, the evil and ugly monster is level 40, how can your small fireballs hurt them, you're only level 1!"

After my encouragement, Lucky looked more motivated. Preparing to attack, instead of only one fireball, it shot out an entire row of them! I was going to faint! The casting speed for spell was frighteningly high for Dragons! Lucky's fired more balls of fire as if they had no cooldown. One fireball after another shot out like a machinegun. In the span of 10 seconds, the helpless zombie was hit at least 20 something times, turning into a pile of ash. Even the 3 silver coins it was supposed to drop was nowhere to be seen!

Seeing that the zombie had been burnt to ashes, Lucky cheerfully danced on my shoulders. A prompt from the system followed suite:

Congratulations! Your Pet is now level 5!

Feeling the weight on my shoulders increase, Lucky had grown larger. It was orinally about a foot in length from head to tail but it now grew to

one metre in length! My god, at this rate he'd grow into the size of a small hill!

As I was lost in my thoughts, another zombie came wandering over. Lucky swiftly rushed up and clawed the zombie, one shotting it! Another prompt appeared:

Congratulations! Your Pet is now level 8!

Lucky was now about 5 meters long!

While I was still in shock, Lucky displayed his superhuman speed, shuttling back and forth between the cluttered zombies. The endless amount of system prompts rang in my ear until I finally reacted and shouted: "Stop Lucky! Quickly return!"

Lucky stretched it's immense 5 meter wings spam and jumped in front of me. It looked at me for praise while showing off it's huge body in front of me. My goodness, with a tiny amount of effort Lucky was already level 36. Due to the shared experience, I had also grown to level 36. Lucky had now grown to the same size as when I first met him, his size being similar to a bus. In addition, his entire body was covered with shiny polished black scales!

"You're so violent!" I said while stroking Lucky's head, "In the future, although you will level really fast, you must keep this a secret from outsiders! If others learned that you were such a strong Pet, they'd definitely try to steal you away!"

(had a system where Pets could be snatched from their owners. If the loyalty of pet exceeded 80, the chances of it being stolen was smaller than 10,000 to 1, but if the loyalty exceeded 95, then it would be impossible.)

Hearing what I said, Lucky used his claws and hugged me while making whining sounds, "Ahhh, quickly let me go, you're going to kill me!" Lucky promptly let go of me, I sat down on the floor fuming angrily, "Your size isn't a problem and so is your strength, but you can't hug me like that next time!"

Lucky then vigorously nodded it's head very fast.