

Rainbow Bridge



Rainbow Bridge is a bonus side story that was included in the Limited Edition version of the [Extra Edition Blu-ray/DVD sets](#). It is a sequel to the Extra Edition Story.

The full translation is available on [Gsimenas's blog on SAO wiki](#), but only part 1 is properly proofread, so there might be some errors in meaning within the text, as well as a lot of awkwardness. The translation will be published on www.dreadfuldecoding.blogspot.com once it is revised.

btw what is Leafa doing in the pic? O.o

Chapter 1

A castle shining in a madder-red colour, floated in the distance of the violet sky.

Two months have passed since the reborn Aincrad was implemented, yet when I look up from the surface of Alfheim's ocean, I still find myself captivated by a mysterious sensation. I just cannot believe that this small structure, and the floating castle that once existed in the skies of a different world, were really of the same size.

Of course, if I spread the wings on my back, take flight and ascend towards the New Aincrad in the faraway sky, before long, the castle will reveal all of its majesty that I will not be able to fully picture. After landing on the first floor from the aperture in the outer circumference, there will be a vast field with various mountains and lakes. I guess that walking from one side to the other will take as much time as it did in the old Aincrad.

While still trying to comprehend that, I continued with my own thoughts.

About being trapped inside that castle during those two years. About wandering through the roadless wastelands, fighting atrocious monsters, encountering lots of people, and then being separated from them. About my battle with Heathcliff on the 75th floor, where we were both defeated and the death game came to an end. I wondered if that was truly reality.

Or.

About landing in Alfheim in search of the slumbering Asuna, and successfully releasing her from the cage of malice at the end of a short but hectic journey. And now, about how I'm spending the tranquil days together with former allies and new friends in both the real and virtual worlds. Again, I wondered if this is a reality.

While I was surrounded by such endless thoughts, I silently looked up at the floating castle illuminated by the evening sun, and——

Suddenly, a loud, horn-like koooo———n sound broke out next to my feet. My avatar's legs lost their ground, as the grayish-white texture of the ground shook violently. Reflexively, I raised my arms and grabbed Asuna's hand with my right, and Klein's with my left.

“Woah, wh-what the--?”, Lisbeth screamed.

“I-it can't be planning to drop us off here, can it—?”, Klein shouted.

“If so, we could just fly, right?”, Agil calmly retorted right away.

The small hole in the ground in front of us spread out suddenly, and a large quantity of water was blown out of it with the force of a geyser.

“Kyuuuuuu!” “Hawawaaaaa!”

These screams were from the small dragon Pina who was just above the hole, and the small ^{pink} fairy Yui who was riding Pina, respectively. Although the abrupt water current shot up to no less than five meters, at that moment Pina spread out its wings and restored her balance, lightly hovering over the top of the water fountain. Joyful laughter resounded, as if I had imagined Yui's scream two seconds ago.

While using my left hand to avoid the small drops of water that were falling down, I exchanged glances with Asuna, and we both gave a wide smile simultaneously.

“.....Wow, it spouted like a tide, huh.”

At that moment, Asuna nodded and answered,

“What can I say, it is a whale, you know.”

That's true.

The party comprised of 7 people, including me, Asuna, Leafa, Silica, Lisbeth, Agil and Klein, and also Yui and Pina, were travelling on the sea, on the back of a giant white whale – one with such a huge size that even an Evil-God Class monster would flee.

Everyone uh-huhed to express their agreement to Asuna's remark and, as the whale's spouting ended, Yui came down from the skies and said while flying to Asuna's left shoulder,

“This does not mean that the whale-san in the real world actually sprays water from its blowhole. It is just that when they exhale close to the surface of the sea, ocean water is also carried along!¹”

“Whaaaat?!”, the seven people exclaimed in unison.

Yui, who just showed her usual encyclopedic knowledge and strong memory, simply said “ahem” and set her small hands upon her hips. While thinking that her posture was lovely, I once again looked up at the floating steel castle in the night sky.

As the reborn Aincrad revolves around the skies of Alfheim at a considerable speed, the outline of the castle I saw a while ago was getting smaller and smaller. I motionlessly fixed my eyes onto the location approximately one-fifth of the castle from the bottom— the place where the profoundly memorable 22nd floor should be.

Although, for now, only the first ten floors have been opened, I'm sure that we will eventually climb up and reach the 20th floor and beyond. When I see the log house built in the depths of the snow-covered forest once again, will I truly be able to believe, I wondered. Believe that the former Aincrad disappeared to distant memory. And believe that the world where games are meant to be played has returned.

The white whale carried us from Thule Island in Alfheim's southwest sea to a beach in Sylph territory.

¹ Actually, the air inside the whale is typically quite warm from the whale's body heat. When it's exhaled, it meets the much cooler temperature of the air outside and immediately condenses, making it look like a spout of water. <http://gizmodo.com/whales-don-t-spray-water-out-of-their-blowholes-1445483468>

Then, with a voice that sounded like a giant tuba, it prompted us to get off. After watching us safely get off his back and land on the white, sandy beach with a gentle expression in the eyes, it turned around leisurely, and swam towards the bright red evening sun in the horizon, in the company of a school of dolphins.

“Whale-saan, thank yooou! Let us ride on your back again sometime, okaaaaay?!”

In response to Yui’s voice, the white whale spouted a very high column of water once again, and its large body sank into the ocean bit by bit. Before long, it could no longer be seen. Yui, who was sitting on Asuna’s shoulder, gently lowered her hands that she had been waving affectionately.

While smiling, I called out to that slightly lonely-looking face.

“I’m sure you’ll meet it again someday. The quest back then looked like it was hinting that it will somehow continue.”

"Oh, ho-hold it right there, Kiri-no-ji!² "

The loud voice that interrupted me and spoiled the atmosphere of the farewell was of course Klein’s. While scratching his unshaven face, he continued with an expression that could not be understood.

“What the heck was the deal with that quest³? Like the mermaid princess turning out to be an jii-san, the jii-san turning out to be a giant octopus, then the giant octopus turning out to be the lord of the abyss, and something about divine beings; I didn’t get any of that stuff.”

“The first one about the mermaid princess was merely your aspiration.”

² Klein nicknames Kirito as キリの字.

³ Quest is shortened to just “que” in this case.

Although I gave a tsukkomi⁴ sort of retort by reflex, I too could not give an immediate reply to Klein's doubts.

Fleetingly looking around my allies, I saw that the former devil of clearing Asuna, the Norse mythology expert Leafa, the muscle^{bank} head intellectual Agil, as well as Lisbeth and Silica, had all folded their arms and said "hmmm".

Today is — July 25, 2025, Friday.

In order to grant Yui's wish of "seeing a whale", we challenged the «Deep Sea Plunderers» quest that was rumoured to have a large, aquatic-type monster.

We were requested, by an ojii-san, to search for an item in a dungeon—just a common errand-type quest — or so we thought. But the truth was that the ojii-san was actually pulling our strings. Unwittingly, we ended up stealing a treasure that was sealed in an Underwater Temple. Well, this was still a common plot⁵, but from here on, the super rapid development, or should I say, an overly rapid plot twist began. The ojii-san had seven HP bars and transformed into a gigantic octopus-type monster, «Kraken the Abyss Lord», who beat us to a near death status with ease - just a single hit from a single tentacle. But, before we could even think that the quest was impossible, a gigantic oji-san, calling himself «Leviathan the Sea Lord», descended from above. Just as the two of them completed their hard to understand conversation, Kraken sunk into the depths of the sea Leviathan then recovered the pearl (which was actually a large egg) that we had taken out of the temple and, at that moment, a "quest cleared" fanfare played — It was such an incomprehensible quest, even after thinking about it again and again.

⁴ A "Tsukkomi" is the straight man in a Japanese comedy duo. Means something like "butt in" and "expose other people's error" then "bring a conversation back from nonsense" as a verb. In Manzai(Japanese stand-up comedy), Boke is the crazy joker(like Klein) who makes nonsensical remarks, and the Tsukkomi(in this case Kirito) hits him with a paper fan while telling him the truth/clarifying up the nonsense.

⁵ The raw uses the English word "story" in katakana. This was changed in the translation because it sounds weird in this context in actual English.

Still dumbfounded, we were initially discouraged by the thought that the rumoured aquatic-type monster was Kraken, but then the oji-san calling himself lord of the seas summoned a white whale, which took us to this beach. So, in any case, the initial objective of Yui getting to see a whale was accomplished. And we all lived happily ever after— although that is true, I understand Klein's feelings of wanting to say “I didn't get any of that stuff”.

After humming for a while, I looked around faces of my comrades, and said,

“I wonder if anyone can accurately remember the talk between the octopus and the ossan⁶?”

If this was in a conventional MMORPG, we could just scroll up the message window with a mouse wheel and browse through the conversation that took place during the quest; however in VRMMORPGs, there's basically no such convenient function. Therefore, there's a technique of using a crystal to record an event's conversation if it sounds important. However, this time, we didn't have such a luxury at all.

In response to my query, the six of them simultaneously tilted their necks, and then shook their heads left and right.

“Heh, indeed a *vanguard-only party* with no mages at all.”

Just as I finished my comment with a sigh mixed in, Liz raised her right hand overhead with the motion of a pitcher about to throw the ball, and consecutively thrust her index finger towards me three times.

"You too! Can't talk down! Other people!"

“.....Yeah, sorry.”

However, at that moment, Yui flew up from Asuna's shoulder, and landed on my head with a pose just like Leviathan's descent at the Underwater Temple.

⁶ Rude term for a middle-aged man.

“I guess it cannot be helped. Although it is kind of cheating, let me reproduce the conversation!”

All of us shouted “ooo” in an amazed voice, and, puffing her chest with an “ahem” sound, the pixie began the narrative while skillfully imitating the tone of the octopus and the oji-san.

Leviathan: “It’s been a long time, my old friend. I see you’re up to your old tricks.

Kraken: “The same to you⁷. How long will you be satisfied as a servant to the Æsir? You’re an embarrassment to the name ‘Lord of the Sea’.”

Leviathan: “I am satisfied with being a king. And this is my domain. Knowing that, do you still wish to fight, Lord of the Abyss?”

Kraken: “For now, I shall withdraw. But I⁸ shall not give up, my friend! One day, I shall claim the prince’s power, and make the accursed gods pay! Until that day!.....”

Leviathan: “That egg belongs to the one that will someday rule all the sea and air. I must find it a New Home⁹, so I shall take it back.”

“.....That is all!”

After Yui's reproduction of the conversation ended, all seven people applauded. Even Pina, sitting on Silica’s head, flapped its wings lively.

"Thank you, Yui. "

After thanking my daughter for the job well done, I started pondering about it once again and continued my speech.

⁷ Uses 貴様 (kisama), which is considered to be one of the most insulting ways to say “you” in modern Japanese (it’s like saying “you bastard”).

⁸ Uses 儂 (washi), which is a personal pronoun used by elderly males to refer to themselves

⁹ 御室 (みむろ, mimuro), which means “home of a nobleman”, is used for “home”. This seems to be a proper noun.

“Hmm..... The proper nouns that concern me are «Æsir¹⁰» and «Prince». I have a feeling that I've heard something like that somewhere, but.....”

“Heere!”

The one who said this while raising her hand enthusiastically, was the wind ^{Sylph} fairy mage and swordswoman, Leafa. Possessing the most knowledge about myths and folklore among all of our party's members, she stepped forward and explained with a clear enunciation,

“The Æsir are a family of gods that come from Norse mythology! You guys have heard of gods like the chief god Odin, the thunder god Thor, and the mischievous Loki among others, haven't you?”

“I have I have I have”

Six people gave their acknowledgement one after another, and Leafa gave a big nod in return.

“Then, as for the Prince.....”

“Go on go on go on”

“I have no idea at all!”

Bam, all of us openly made a falling to our back motion, and started pondering again.

The next one to speak was the cat ^{Cairn-Sith} fairy ^{Beast-Tamer} beast user, Silica.

“Err, in short, the Kraken-ojii-chan detests the Æsir, but, since he hasn't been able to win yet, he wants to obtain the «Prince's power» to become stronger..... is that how it is?”

“If even that giant octopus's ridiculous power was no match for the Æsir, I wonder what kind of power do they have.....”, said the blacksmith ^{Leprechaun} fairy Lisbeth, while tossing her metallic gloss pink hair.

¹⁰ Æsir is the plural form of Óss in Old Norse, which is why "are" was used.

“Well, they ^{are} gods after all”, said the water ^{Undine} fairy Asuna, adding on to the conversation. Then, the one who interrupted with a self-important tone was the fire ^{Salamander} fairy, Klein.

“That’s right, ya younglings might not know, but Odin is actually of the strongest class. The moment he’s summoned, bam! And the monster is sliced into two.....”

“Oi oi, that’s not the plot within the myth.”, the ground ^{Gnome} fairy Agil inserted a tsukkomi with a stunned expression, and everyone, including Yui, burst into laughter.

Understanding the parody¹¹ in Klein’s remarks, I formed a wry smile as well. While doing so, I thought about why I felt a faint sense of discomfort in this conversation.

The answer immediately came.

During the quest, Kraken and Leviathan appeared as NPCs until the very end ———Even though they were essentially boss-class monsters. It can be expected that their conversation was nothing but a scenario written by the scenario writer-shi¹² of «Ymir», the company that manages ALO.

And yet, all of us talked about Kraken and Leviathan as if they had their own individual consciousness.

Perhaps the reason for that is that their words sounded far too human. The remorseful and angry expression of Kraken, unwilling to accept his defeat and declaring "I will not give up!", inadvertently led us to think that "Hmm that octopus must have went through a lot..."

Or possibly, Kraken and Leviathan..... are not mere NPCs?

Asuna and I encountered and adventured with a female dark elf knight during the early stages of old Aincrad’s floor clearing.

¹¹ Klein's remark is a reference to final fantasy. Odin (オーディン, Ōdin) is a recurring Summon Monster in the series. Most commonly, Odin will appear and slice through enemies with his sword, cleaving them in two and inflicting Instant Death.<http://finalfantasy.wikia.com/wiki/Odin>

¹² 氏 (shi) is an honorific similar to -san, but more formal and not as common.

She was called Kizmel, but, despite being an NPC, she was not just a moving object that repeated standard phrases. Her ability to reply to our words... could even be regarded as volition.

ALO has a software architecture that is almost identical to the one in the old SAO. That means, even when looking at the ability of Control System, the existence of «Highly Intelligent NPCs»¹³ like Kizmel was already possible.

However, in that case.....won't Kraken become an existence that doesn't just act according to the quest's script, despite being a quest NPC? Meaning that obtaining something like the «Prince's power», rising against the Æsir, such things are all that big octopus's own will.....?

“.....That can't be the case, right?”

Realising that my thoughts were going too far into the field of absurdity, I halted such mutters and conjectures. At the exact instant, Klein, who had been facing Silica and the others, lecturing them on how powerful were the Odin and Bahamut¹⁴ of the good old days, suddenly started shouting hysterically.

“Awwww, *crap!* I have a pizza delivery order at ten o'clock!”

“Oi oi, that's in three minutes. You know, it will take ten minutes to fly to Swilvane from here.”

At Agil's calm points, Klein held his head with both of his arms and bent backwards as much as he could.

“MY¹⁵ SEAFOOD PIZZA AND DRAUGHT BEER——!”

With the nostalgia brought up by the line that I had also heard a long time ago¹⁶, I went to the katana user and tapped him on the sleeves of his large Japanese-style armour.

¹³ Original text is "高度にAI化されたNPC" which literally means "Highly AI-fied NPCs".

¹⁴ A mythical fish from Arabic mythology <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bahamut>, but probably referencing the summon Bahamut from the Final Fantasy series. <http://finalfantasy.wikia.com/wiki/Bahamut>

¹⁵ Uses the 様(-sama) honorific after 俺 (ore) (I, my), which indicates arrogance. It is like saying "I the highness's"

¹⁶ See volume 01 chapter 2/anime episode 1

“We’ll watch over you until your avatar disappears, so calm down. You must enjoy it to the max this time, yeah.”

After I said that, Klein blinked for a moment and then expressed that he understood the meaning of my words with a light “hehe” laughter.

“Right. In that case, I’ll take you up on your kind offer and excuse myself for the day.”

“I offer my best regards to all the shrimps, crabs, cuttlefish and octopuses on the pizza~”

While making a complicated-looking face to Liz’s words, Klein opened his main menu.

“Well then, great work, everyone!”

After tapping on the logout button, the salamander’s avatar automatically switched to a one knee kneeling position, closed its eyes and stopped moving.

In ALO, to prevent people from «Escaping» from player skirmishes, the player’s avatar will remain on site for a little while when logging out in the field. Naturally, it’s highly likely that monsters would target the player. The player would then find themselves in the form of a left behind fire when they logged in later.

Therefore, when logging out outside the area, a player’s allies would normally protect their avatar until the timeout elapses and the player’s avatar disappears. Thankfully, it doesn't look like that this beach has many strong monsters spawning, thus I looked away from Klein’s body and proposed,

“If anyone else beside him wants to logout, go right ahead.. I’ll watch over you till the end.”

At my words, Asuna was the first to bring up her right hand apologetically .

“Err..... then I’ll be logging out too, if it’s okay.....”

Although I haven't met her yet, I have heard stories that Asuna's mother was a very strict person, so I nodded quickly.

"It's fine. Thanks for today."

"Yeah, thanks to everyone for today too, thank you for the great work¹⁷!"

As Asuna nimbly operated the menu to log out and her avatar switched to a standby position, Agil, who has to stock his shop for tomorrow, Liz, who has a TV show she wants to watch, and Silica, who has to complete today's homework, all requested to instantly log out and left the fairy homeworld together.

When Silica went into a standby posture, Pina, who was sitting on Silica's head, began to look around restlessly, as if trying to protect her avatar. "How noble" ... while thinking that, I stretched my limbs.

At that moment, my eyes met Leafa's, who had taken the exact same pose at the exact same time.

Somehow, we grinned together, and then I turned my eyes towards the west horizon.

Before I became aware of it, the sun had completely set, with only a deep vermilion left above the horizon. Yui, who was sitting on my head, used my shoulder as a springboard to plunge into my chest pocket, and made a lovely yawn.

".....Papa, the whale-san was really big, wasn't it?"

I gently brushed the head of the pixie who said this in a sleepy voice with my fingertips.

"Yeah. Let's ride it again someday."

"Yeah....."

Yui nodded and closed her eyelids, then, immediately afterwards, she began sleeping, breathing softly.

¹⁷ The first instance of thanking is “今日はありがとう” (lit. thanks for today), while the second instance is お疲れ様でした, which is a set expression for thanking someone for their work.

Yui, an AI independent from ALO's system, has no need to sleep like a human, but when she has a large quantity of information input and nothing urgent to process, she often conducts memory sorting in a sleeping state. In all likelihood, today's adventure was being played back in Yui's dream right about now.

After a while, at first Klein's avatar, then Asuna's, after that Agil's, Liz's, and Silica's avatars, as well as Pina, all scattered into beads of light and disappeared.

I faced Leafa and, while casually extending my right hand, said, "Well then, Sugu, shall we return to Swilvane in one flight?"

Upon that, my little sister pouted lightly.

"You know, Onii-chan, since we're not in the water, we don't have to fly while holding hands."

"Ah.....I-I see... Sorry, didn't mean to....."

However, the blonde mage-and-swordswoman quickly snatched the hand that I withdrew.

"However, since I'm better than you in the sky, from here on, I'll be leading the way!"

".....I-I'm counting on you"

We spread our wings at the same time and took off from the sandy beach that was being dyed in purple.

Returning my glance to the northeast, the gigantic silhouette of the World Tree in the background of the sky, where stars had begun twinkling, came into my view. Before us, a cluster of green lights glittered like jewels. It was the dear Sylph territory capital, Swilvane.

After confirming that Yui was in her place in my pocket, Leafa and I nodded, and we took off riding on the sea breeze.

New Chapter in Progress!

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¹⁸ Chapter 1 from <http://dreadfuldecoding.blogspot.de/2014/11/rainbow-bridge-1.html> on 1st June, 2015