

The Visitor (chapter 2)

The disconnect

PurpleDee was having a great time on Birth Isle. Killing Jellies of all kinds, and a few Choropies too, was getting easier and easier. She was level seven now and almost all the Mobs had green or even blue names now.

She had long since gotten rid of the Bamboo spear that she had found earlier. She used a shiny new short sword now. A Mini-Choropy had dropped that. She also had on a nice pair of yellow jeans instead of the shorts and T shirt she had worn earlier. A regular Jelly Bean had dropped them a while ago but she had been unable to put them on until she reached level seven. A pair of bright red orange Dash Shoes {which strangely had a blue name in her inventory and the word “Elven” in front of the regular name) and a nice little stripy blue “Bandana of Inguje” finished off her outfit. She had also found a little pair of green and white “Safe Gloves” but she didn’t want to wear them because they looked kind of lame. She wasn’t really sure about the bandana either but the protection it gave her made it worth her while to wear it.

She headed back down to see Aura’s fairy for what seemed like the millionth time and decided to ask her the one question that she had been avoiding so far.

“I think I’ve kind of exhausted this place”, she said as she ran up to the fairy. “What I do now”?

“It’s about time”, said the fairy. “I thought you were never going to ask that. Most Visitors leave Birth Isle by about level three or four. I know that your player knows this already so I can only assume that he kept you here for such a long time for a very good reason”.

“You said HE”, interrupted Dee, “I thought you said that players could be ‘he’ or ‘she’ and that you didn’t know which was which”.

“Stop trying to be smart”, scolded the fairy, “You know barely anything about the universe of ROSE yet. You have such a lot to learn still. If you remember, I also told you that I recognized the aura of your player when I first met you. I have encountered your particular player several times before and I can tell you categorically that he is male. I can’t really explain how I know. You will just have to take my word for it”.

“Sorry”, said Dee. She felt a little foolish now but continued her question anyway.

“So what *do* I do next?” she asked in her sweetest and most innocent voice. She looked up at the fairy through her eyelashes and opened her lovely blue eyes as wide as they would go.

“How can I ever stay mad at you PurpleDee?” giggled the fairy. “You are just so adorable when you do that.”

“Well you have finished all the training quests that I gave you. You got all the Jelly Beans and the Choropies, even the 10 minute timed Choropy quest. You will notice in your quest window that you have a couple more quests that you have no way to presently fulfill..”

“Hold it!” Interrupted Dee once again. “What is all this about a quest window?”

“Do you mean to say that your player hasn’t even had you open your quest window yet?” Asked the fairy in a rather incredulous tone. “Do I have to take care of everything around here?”

Dee felt a sensation of disembodied humor surrounding her. She knew by now that this was coming from her player so she waited expectantly for what came next. Her player seemed to like to tease the fairy whenever he could. It was something that Dee felt that they had in common.

Suddenly, Dee saw that same long black object in her mind's eye. This was about the third time it had happened now. She clearly saw a finger press down on a key labeled simply "Q". Immediately the image dissolved from her mind and a translucent window appeared in front of her. In it were listed a number of items which appeared to be instructions for what she had to do. She watched as her player's cursor selected one of the items from the list. It said something along the lines of "Go and see Mairard".

"Who or what the heck is Mairard?" she wondered.

Suddenly she heard the familiar click from the cursor and a bunch of information about the quest appeared in the previously empty area beneath the quest list. It told her that she needed to go and see a man named Mairard in a small village in a larger area called "The Adventurer's Plains". This man, so it seemed, would give her some identification papers that would later be needed for her to take a job.

"I have to get a job?" she asked aloud.

"Of course you do," replied the fairy. "Without a job, you can never learn all the special skills that you are going to need to survive in R.O.S.E. I seem to recall you saying something about living the life of a Merchant in our first conversation. It just so happens that there is a job known as 'Dealer' which teaches you how to do precisely that."

"WOW!" said Dee. "You're right. I do have a lot to learn still. I had no idea there was so much to do here."

Her eyes flickered back to the quest window as the cursor selected and clicked another entry in the list. This one told her that she would have to hunt creatures known as Flanae. The next entry in the list was similar but involved hunting Pumpkins. Both offered a reward. The cursor moved to a small "x" in the top right corner of the quest window and she heard the familiar click again. The window disappeared as if it had never been there but now Dee knew precisely how to bring it back at any time.

Suddenly everything went grey, The fairy was gone and the now familiar feeling of being watched over was gone too. For the first time in PurpleDee's short life, she was scared.

"Where am I? What's going on?" she whimpered but there was no answer. The grayness just seemed to go on and on although on a certain level of her consciousness she knew that it hadn't been more than a second or two so far.

Finally the grayness began to recede and out of the hazy distance, a castle-like structure came into view. Now that she had a point of reference, Dee realized that she was actually moving at an incredible speed. She half closed her eyes, fearful to watch, as the castle approached her at a dizzying rate. She feared she would hurtle directly into its walls but at the last minute, the entire world kind of rotated in a weird sort of lurch. She found her self going across a drawbridge over a moat, then through a large gated entrance and on down a long corridor. Suddenly she was floating above a pedestal and the only motion that she felt was of gently bobbing up and down.

"Hi Dee," said a gentle voice that sounded incredibly like her own.

Dee looked around in surprise and saw a girl who could have been her twin except for a combination of the clothes that she wore and the feeling of raw power that exuded from her very being.

“I’m your big sister, PurpleYouko,” said the girl. “I’m so glad to finally meet you. Our player has been planning your creation for such a long time.”

Dee looked a little more closely at her newly discovered sister.

“So this is the headstrong Mage that the fairy told me about,” she thought to herself.

PurpleYouko was dressed from head to foot in purple. Well actually that wasn’t quite true. The overwhelming purpleness ended abruptly just below the knees. The effect was strange to say the least so Dee decided to start at the top and work downward in an effort to categorize everything that her sister was actually wearing.

On her head was a pointy purple witch hat which was sort of squished over in the middle so that the top angled over towards the left. Her face was partially concealed behind a strip of cloth with holes cut for the eyes. Dee somehow knew that it was called a “Zorro Mask”. The effect was quite charming.

On her body, PurpleYouko wore a purple doublet and hoses that were obviously designed especially for a Mage. The lower part of the outfit ended in a large bulbous kind of shape and a tight cuff just above the knee on each of her legs. Underneath this she wore what appeared to be fishnet tights that looked a little out of place. A large pair of fairy wings protruded from her back and in her right, gray gloved, hand she held a long white staff with a crook at the end. To top it all off, everything she wore or held seemed to have a deep glow of barely concealed power that emanated from it. The overall effect was that she strongly resembled a super-hero fairy with an incredible attitude. Dee was glad that they were on the same side. Hebern was going to have his hands full when he came up against her sister in the final battle.

Finally, Dee looked to the lowest part of her sister’s body.. her feet. It was here that the illusion of the super-hero fairy abruptly fell apart. She wore a pair of heavy brown boots that reached almost as high as her knees. Dee could feel the incredible aura of power that surrounded them. They were undeniably one of the most potent items that she wore but they just looked so out of place. A nice pair of purple sandals would have looked so much better.

Dee suddenly felt a strangely foreign thought go through her head and for a moment, she didn’t realize where it had come from.

“Ozzy was right. Fairies *do* wear boots.”

PurpleYouko giggled and Dee realized that they had both shared the thought. That could only mean one thing. Her (their, she corrected herself) player was here and it had been his thought.

“Come on Dee.” The thought suddenly filled her mind. “We aren’t finished yet.” It was the first time that her player had spoken directly to her. She was utterly astonished at the feeling of vibrant power in his voice. She felt herself wanting to bow down and worship him. The fairy had been right about this too. The players might well be the equal or even the superior of the Gods of R.O.S.E.

The familiar cursor, appeared and moved directly to her own chest, then she felt the click like a thunderbolt as it shook her to her core. The pure ecstasy of the feeling sent her reeling back into the grayness once more.

“Later Dee”, came the familiar voice of her sister as if from an impossible distance. “When you get to Zant, make sure you look up Crow at the storage facility. I left a few presents there for you.”

Finally, the voice faded into the gray nothingness and she was left with only the sensation of the proximity to her player. It was even stronger now.

“This is the space between the worlds of R.O.S.E.” The magnificent power of her player’s voice filled her head once more. “We call it ‘Oblivion’. Only here or back in the selection hall where you met your sister, am I able to talk to you directly. In the true worlds of R.O.S.E I can only guide you and communicate by empathy. Don’t worry Dee, I will always look after you. You are destined to be the most successful dealer that there has ever been. The first thing we need to do is get you to Zant so that you can get your job.”

The voice was getting fainter so she knew that she must be approaching her destination.

With an inaudible popping sensation, Dee found herself once more inside the stone circle behind Aura’s fairy. She quickly made her way out of the circle, then impulsively turned and looked back up at the higher rock atop the first large one. She was shocked to see that the upper rock was a head that was looking beseechingly up at the sky. The larger rock that supported the head was the upper part of a gargantuan body. She looked again at the smaller rock pillars that curled inward as if to cradle the place where she had so recently been given her first taste of life, and noticed to her horror that they were the fingers of giant hands. Some giant being had literally been turned to stone here, and then buried almost all the way in the ground.

Dee quickly rushed to the fairy’s side.

“I just realized what this place really is. Please tell me that this isn’t the result of some great evil.”

“I’m sorry little one.” Replied the fairy. “I can’t tell you anything much about what happened here in the distant past. All I can say is that at some point, a number of giant beings, gave up their lives to imbue various areas around the seven planets with a mystical force that allows Visitors to be reborn time and time again. Whether the sacrifice was voluntary, whether it was done by forces of evil or good, I cannot say. Maybe one day you will be able to uncover the secret and tell us all.”

“That’s so said.” Thought Dee to herself. She silently vowed to find out the secret behind these life giving giants and the sacrifice that they had willingly or unwillingly made.

“Anyway,” said Dee, changing the subject completely, “Do you have any idea what it was that just happened to me? One minute I was here talking to you, and then suddenly I found myself in a strange castle. My sister was there too.”

“Oh that.” Replied the fairy. “That was what we call a ‘Server Disconnect’. You see, the world in which the players live is connected to this one by a delicate mystical web known as ‘The Internet’. The threads of this web are connected to intricate magical devices known as ‘ports’. These in turn connect to a creature called ‘The Client’ at the player’s side of the web and another called ‘The Server’ at this end of the web. ‘The Server’ is a very stubborn and headstrong beast that doesn’t like to be harnessed to the web. It constantly tries to find ways to throw off all of the threads of the web. When it

manages to break your connection, you get sent back to your resting place, ready to be summoned once more as soon as the connection is re-established.

“Wow that’s a bit complicated.” Said Dee. She tried to get her head around the concept of the mystical web that could connect multiple worlds together.

“How do the threads of the web get re-connected after a Server Disconnect?” she asked.

“The ‘Web Spiders’ take care of all that.” Replied the fairy. “They are led by the ‘Great Spider of Google’ who controls the lesser ‘Google Spiders’ and ‘Yahoo Spiders’. There are also a number of minor spiders like the ‘MSN’ spiders but as far as we can tell, these don’t do a significant amount of work. If you want to know more about this I suggest you talk with Spero when you get to Zant.”

PurpleDee thought it over for a moment then asked “So what is this Zant? My sister said something about it then after that, my player mentioned it while we were traveling through Oblivion to get here.”

The fairy was silent for a moment, then finally she began in an awed voice, “Your Player actually spoke to you?”

“Well... yeah he did,” said Dee. “Is that unusual or something?”

Aura’s fairy looked first shocked then very excited. She began to flap her wings much harder and to bob up and down even more than usual.

“Oh WOW!” she began breathlessly. “I have to tell the Goddess about this. This could be just the breakthrough that we have been waiting for. A Player actually talking to a Visitor? Oh My. This is incredible.”

The fairy rambled on almost incoherently for a minute or two. It almost seemed as if she were talking to someone who wasn’t there. PurpleDee began to wonder if she had her own player after all.

Finally the fairy seemed to calm down a little and she looked back toward PurpleDee. “I have communed with the Goddess herself,” she began. She was smiling so broadly that it almost seemed to Dee that her face might split in half at any moment. “We both feel that you and your family may well be the chosen ones.” She continued. “I have suspected that your player was talking to PurpleYouko for some time now but she would never confirm it to me. Oh my. There’s no time to lose. I have to transport you to the Adventurer’s Plains immediately.”

“Wait,” said Dee, “I have more questions!” but it was too late. With a flick of her magic wand, the fairy began to fade from view. Dee once more found herself in the gray nothingness of Oblivion. The now familiar voice of her player once more filled her head.

“Well that went even better than I thought it would,” he said. The laughter was evident in his tone.

“You made me do that on purpose,” replied Dee indignantly then she too began to laugh silently. It really had been funny to watch the fairy’s response.

“You catch on fast Dee,” replied her player. “I’ve been dying to do that for such a long time but I just had to wait until I could bring you along. PY is great but she just isn’t quite right for jobs like this. She has power to spare but is a little lacking in finesse.”

Her player’s voice began to fade again and she knew that she was almost at her destination.

“Will I ever see the fairy again?” asked Dee, suddenly concerned.

“You can never return to Birth Isle once you leave it,” replied her player, “However there are great changes on the way. I will leave you with one last word to ponder while you do your quests.

Dee could hardly hear her player’s voice now. She listened intently and was almost sure she caught the final word. “Evolution”

“Now what the heck did he mean by that?” she wondered. So deep was she in her thoughts that she didn’t even notice when a bustling village appeared around her.