

Second World - Chapter 1 - 1. Beta Test

It was a hot afternoon in front of the Trigitech Branch Corporation building. A line of young people and teenagers were queueing to go inside the hi-tech looking building. The irregular facade with a dome-shaped roof covered by reflective materials perfectly suited the corporation's image as the top leading VR gaming company. Today was the day the company started the Beta testing of its newest game, Second World.

Virtual Reality games had been flourishing in the past 30 years, almost all the entertainments in this modern world were revolved around VR games, and many professional gamers and workshops had emerged following these VR games, creating a new line of professionalism. But of course, there were still many who just played for fun. One of whom was Jack Fei, a veteran VR gamer who had registered for the Beta Testing. Little did he know that it would involve queuing up under hot sun for hours. His shirt had been soaked with sweat, he would have brought an extra shirt for change if he had known.

Second World had been heavily promoted in the past year. It was hailed as the pinnacle of VR technology and would implement a new engine that pushed the game further into realism. It was said to be able to truly become a second world for the people of this Earth, and would compel other VR games to become obsolete, or so the marketing said. And it seemed many people believed it, looking at the number of people that had registered for this Beta Test. Many among them are famous workshops and members from well-known in-game guilds. But Jack didn't really think much of it, it was enough if he could enjoy a new VR game. The queue proceeded at a snail pace as company employers performed multiple checks on the attendees at the entrance.

Do you need to be so strict? Jack thought out loud.

It was another hour before it was Jack's turn. After several rigorous checks, he was ushered inside and arrived at another queue within the building's courtyard.

Are you F***ing kidding me..?! Jack was exasperated. The sun would have set by the time he started doing the Beta test.

It was at this time that a bright light flashed. An intense sound was ringing in his ear, or in his head, he couldn't tell. Clutching his head, he fell to his knees due to intense pain. He then experienced a sense of Vertigo, he didn't know if

he was standing, on the ground, or falling into some sort of abyss. By the time the ringing subsided, he opened his eyes trying to see what had caused this sensation. Could a bomb had just exploded nearby? A rival corporation trying to sabotage this event? His vision was blurry for a while before he could start seeing things normally again. He was indeed on the ground on all four. He surveyed his surrounding, expecting to find wreckage due to the explosion, but everything seemed normal.

Wait, no, it was not normal. He swiveled 360 degrees. Something was definitely wrong here. He couldn't see any people that had been queueing with him a moment before. He went back to the entrance, no sign of the company employers. In fact, the outside street was completely empty.

Did I have a coma? This was the thought that surfaced at first. Then he heard some noises from inside the corporation building. He turned around and tried to listen further. Yes, there were definitely noises, people's voices. He immediately ran towards the building, he needed to find someone and asked what had happened. He reached the double glass doors that automatically slid open when he was near and dashed inside, only to be tripped by something on the ground and fell to the floor. He massaged his pained waist due to the fall and looked back at the thing that had made him tripped. It was a black chest.

Who the heck put a chest in front of a door?

He touched his hand on the chest to push it out of the doorway, only to hear a sound of notification flaring inside his mind.

"Please enter your alias," a mechanized female sound was heard, accompanied by a blue hologram that appeared above the chest.

"What...?" Jack was flabbergasted. What was this? Some kind of new interactive technology?

"Please enter your alias," the female sound insisted.

Jack looked around to see if anyone was present. Perhaps this was all an elaborate prank.

The female voice asked him for the third time.

After some thought, Jack answered, "Storm Wind." His usual alias in most of his VR games was Lone Wind. He had decided that for this coming Second World account, he would use a new user name, considering it as having a new slate. This Storm Wind was the name he thought of yesterday night prior to the planned Beta Test. He didn't realize he would be using it now.

"Affirmative. Storm Wind registered. Please select your basic class."

The black chest opened with a click. The lid swung open and revealed three sets of items. A sword and armor, a dagger and suit, a staff and cloth.

"The heck..."

Jack felt a sense of dreamlike feeling. Why do I find this familiar?

"Please select your basic class." The female sounded again.

I get it, this might be some kind of a promotion campaign, Jack thought. These selections were what RPG players usually given when they started playing the game. As a candidate for Beta tester, he had received some general information on the upcoming Second World game. Players would start out by choosing one of the 3 basic classes: Fighter, Ranger, and Magician. After leveling some, they will be able to upgrade to an advanced class. The sword and armor must symbolize the Fighter class, the dagger and suit for Ranger, while the staff and cloth were obviously for Magician. He admitted this kind of marketing program was indeed interesting, it put realism into perspective.

All right, how about this. He stretched out both his hands. One to grab the sword, the other the staff. His hand stopped an inch before the weapons, it was as if an invisible force field was preventing him from touching the equipment.

"Please select only one class," the female sound reprimanded.

He pulled out his right hand, his left hand could now touch the sword unobstructed.

Damn. This was a really advanced tech! He thought. He didn't know human's technology had advanced so far.

He took out the sword and armor from the chest. He mostly played as warrior in VR RPG games, more sense to pick the class he was most comfortable

with. Once the sword and armor were out, the chest vanished into dust of light. Before Jack could register his surprise, the sword and armor also disappeared from his hands and light enveloped him. In a moment the armor reappeared on his body with the sword inside a scabbard dangling from his waist.

"You have chosen the Fighter class. You have 1 free attribute and 1 free skill point, you can open your status window to allocate this point at any time."

"Status window...?"

A blue hologram appeared in front of him showing all kinds of letters and numbers.

Storm Wind

Class: Fighter

Level: 1

Attributes:

- HP = 120/120

- Stamina = 110/110

- Strength = 12

- Dexterity = 11

- Intelligence = 10

- Endurance = 12

- Reflex = 11

- Wisdom = 11

- Luck = 1

Experience: 0/100

Jack stared at the holographic projection for the longest time, couldn't think of what to make of it. He was startled out of his daze by a scream. He turned around and scanned the hall. It was still empty, but now that he paid attention to it, there were noises in the background, and the noises were getting louder.

Not long after, he heard the sounds of footsteps. Hurried steps, probably running. It came from the floor above. A few seconds later, the sound materialized into a person in a white cloth wearing a strange monocle on his eye, hurrying down the wide stairs in the middle of the hall. The person was holding a long staff in one hand while the other was gripping a round metallic object. He was gasping.

"H-help..!" He yelled out once he registered Jack's present.

Jack was still out in the blue when he heard a couple of running steps from where the man came down from. Before the man with the staff reached the bottom of the stairs, two ragged figures came down of it. Their ragged was not limited to their attire, the face and flesh were also ragged.

Zombies...?

