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Reki Kawahara

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Kirito plunges into a suspicious new VRMMORPG called ALfheim Online to rescue Asuna, who never returned from Sword Art Online. ALO offers many features to entertain players in the wake of SAO: ultra high-end graphics, action-heavy gameplay, and a choice of fairy races, complete with a next-generation flight engine. Playing as a Spriggan, Kirito heads for the location of Asuna's prison--the top of the World Tree, the final destination of every player in the game! Along the way, Kirito nearly falls to a plot hatched by the enemy Salamanders, just barely surviving the ordeal with the help of a Sylph named Leafa and his Navigation Pixie, Yui. But just as Kirito and Leafa make it to the foot of the World Tree, the end of their quest in sight, both Kirito and Leafa each realize the other has a very big secret...

Sword Art Online, Vol. 04: Fairy Dance Details

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From Reader Review Sword Art Online, Vol. 04: Fairy Dance for online ebook

Jo Carter says

This will be a mainly positive review, because on the whole there weren't many things I didn't like in the second part of Fairy Dance.

I wasn't bothered by Asuna's damsel-in-distress/Princess Peach status. There was no way it would have been believable for Sugou to give her a weapon whilst in the cage. Also, she does get out of it for a short while and uncovers a key piece for Kirito - which would never have enabled him to save her without it. I still think she's a kickass heroine despite being locked away.

I did think the slugs groping her was unnecessary, not every bad person sexually assaults their victims (btw, in case you were wondering, the assaults aren't *graphic*. They aren't pretty, but it's more like, "hands sliding up her dress", not actual full blown description of her private parts being violated or anything). The more I watch of anime the more I see it's kind of the *norm* for that stuff to be in there. Like, I haven't watched heaps of anime, and this is the first series I'm reading from a Japanese author. But I definitely see more rape-y situations happening in anime verses Aust & American T.V.

So, for me, I don't think this volume wrecks Asuna's character for me. I don't think she should be put down as a character because she was held in a cage. She did all she could in the situation she was in.

This volume did feel larger than necessary - I guess is a way to put it. When reading the first part of Fairy Dance, a few of the places felt like filler to me. Particularly when Kirito stops the Salamanders from attacking the treaty meeting, but I guess that needs to happen for them to help him get past the bottom of the World Tree.

I feel like the Suguha/Kazuto storyline doesn't add anything to the existing plot, except for it's entertainment value. Like Reki Kawahara says in his Afterword at the back: "This two-volume story was both a continuation of the story from Volume 1, and a very, very long epilogue. At the time I started writing it, I was only planning on having it be about the hero, Kirito, searching for and finding the heroine, Asuna. But the more I added to the story, the longer it grew in the telling."

Despite the extra sub-plot not needing to be there, I really liked it. It's one of my favourites. I really loved how Kawahara created a *sort of* love triangle and managed not to make it a big mess. As much as Suguha is upset about her feelings for her cousin, I like that Kazuto doesn't share or grow these feelings (we'd have words about betraying Asuna if he did), and that he handles the whole situation remarkably well for someone who always seems to get close with the ladies.

It does piss me off that Kirito is the ONLY guy all the chicks fall in love with. And Kawahara does apologise for this in the previous novel. However, it didn't annoy me that Suguha liked him, like I did when Liz and Silicia did. I felt like there was an actual reason for Suguha to develop feelings for him (his sudden niceness to her again/finding out he's her brother/him living on the edge of death for two years/etc.), and the other two girls not so much. I didn't like their insta-love. It felt more like a crush than proper in-love feelings and I wish they'd get over it and move onto Klein (the poor guy!).

Gosh. I'm nearly all talked out!

The only other thing I really want to mention is, the whole episode with Tonky and Jotunhein, felt random. Like, you-know, let's get eaten by a worm just for shits and giggles so we can discover this friendly demonic God, and the best sword in the game. It just didn't feel necessary and more filler. I actually really liked that the anime took it out and put it into the future.

But, I do get that it gave the Sylths and Cait Siths time to get to Alne with all their weapons. So I guess it kind of has a reason?

Overall, another good edition to the story. I'm SUPER looking forward to meeting Sinnon. I love her IRL storyline and cannot wait for the extras that weren't in the anime series! But I swear, if she ends up liking Kirito too!!! RAGE!!

haha :) x

Elizabeth Patterson says

Love it

This is a great book for any fan of SAO. Or if you just want a great story set in the realm of an online fantasy game.

Sean O'Hara says

On the whole this is a fun fast paced read, but it suffers from the same problem as the previous volume -- Asuna is reduced to the status of Princess Peach waiting for Mario to rescue her from King Koopa -- who again tries to get all rapey with her. She does manage to escape once, but she's of course recaptured since we can't have a female protagonist saving herself.

That would just be lame. I mean, the damsel-in-distress trope has been with us for thousands of years. Why change a good thing? And just to make sure Asuna learns her lesson about being a strong feminist figure, she's threatened with an extra helping of rapeyness with added tentacles.

Reki, Reki, Reki.

How can you take a kick ass character and reduce her to this? Yeah, she does manage to contribute to her escape in one important way, but ultimately she has to rely on her boyfriend to save the day. Lame.

At least the other female character in the book gets to kick some major ass. Sugouha FTW. If only Lizbet and Silica had had a chance to get in on the action, it would've been awesome enough to make up for Asuna's depowering.

Hopefully the GGO arc is better.

Liz says

Awesome!

Laura says

Kirito has completed his quest.

Fairy Dance Volume 2 has action, drama, introspection and insight all wrapped up into a neat 200 page volume. Some minor editing issues from the Yen Press team aside, this volume was quite enjoyable. Kawahara's writing is really starting to show some finesse in this volume, especially when he's writing for Suguha or Asuna's point-of-view. It's refreshing to see part of the story told from another perspective and more description of the world around Alfheim and ALO in general. The third person narrative gives deeper meaning to the madness of this arc's villain.

For those who aren't familiar with the Fairy Dance Arc of Sword Art Online, I'll summarize the first part of Fairy Dance for you. Two months have passed since Kirito defeated Heathcliff and freed the remaining players of Sword Art Online from their collective doom. However, 300 players, including Kirito's lover Asuna, have yet to awaken from their comas. After seeing an image of a character from a VRMMORPG known as Alfheim Online (ALO) of an NPC that looks nearly identical to Asuna, Kirito ventures into ALO once more in a desperate quest to save his love from a fate of marrying this arc's villain, Sugou Nobuyuki. With the aid of Leafa, who is Kirito's sister Suguha, they begin a desperate journey to conquer the World Tree.

As it turns out, Asuna and the other comatose SAO Survivors who have not awakened are being held captive in the ALO server against their wills. It's a familiar trope for Kawahara to use at this point but there's no indication until the beginning of the novel about what's been happening to them all. Asuna is the Queen of Alfheim alongside Sugou and while she's taken on the damsel in distress role in this arc, she does manage to remain defiant, feisty and still Asuna throughout. There are a couple of scenes in the book that feel like Kawahara is writing down a wet dream but Asuna is still Asuna until the very end.

There's also the shocking, or not-so-shocking revelation about Kirito and Leafa's relationship inside of ALO that is predictable down to its core. They stare at each other, dumbfounded before having a moment of extreme sibling rivalry to settle their differences. Suguha accepts that Kirito's heart will never be fully hers and seems to be okay with the notion of knowing that Kazuto will still have room for both her and Asuna in his life. It's very cookie cutter and worthy of gagging on if you find that copious amounts of sap are not quite your cup of tea. This is a Science Fiction series, not a Harlequin Romance!

Now, I'm afraid that I have to voice an issue with the translators at Yen Press for this series. There are other series of Manga (Japanese comic books) that leave the suffixes that denote cultural nuances into their translations with a glossary at the beginning or end of their volumes. For example, the "-chan" suffix can be used to identify a close friend or a siblings with other notable examples include "-san" or "-senpai." I wish that these had been left in the English translation of the novels because it takes away from the cultural difference that makes another country so unique. I can overlook this oversight but I hope that it will be corrected in future volumes of the series. Sword Art Online will never be a pinnacle of literature but it's entertaining and quite the page turner.

Suffice to say, here's looking at you GunGale Online and SAO Progressive Vol. 1.

Rama Sagala says

Epic conclusion of an epic sequel...

Rebecca says

Were Reki Kawahara a better author, this would have been a better book. Simplistic, I know, but that's the main issue here - *Fairy Dance* is just unable to rise above its problems, such as overwritten description, far too many girls falling for Kirito, and a villain so malicious and overdrawn as to be ridiculous. The concept is still as fun as when Vivian Vande Velde used it in the late 1990s, and the book is enjoyable to a point, but I can't help thinking that in more skilled hands, it would have been much better.

Abby Ang says

the magnetism of our souls was so strong it was practically visible, sparkling with light in the space that separated us

my deep unending love had turned that familiar image into one beaming with sublime radiance

the prose is KILLING ME

Robert says

This novel concludes the Fairy Dance Arc AND the Ainrad Arc of Sword Art Online, and in that it exceeds. This book even gets into unknown heights when it comes to Light Novels, since Kirito kind of stops being an average-joe-protagonist that so many LNs feature, instead he evolves into a main character that has emotions, that acts accordingly to what he feels, and if you piss him off, he can get somewhat cruel - which is something you don't see that often in a Light Novel, where every MC seems to be a morale apostle.

The Epilogue by itself was really good, especially since we haven't had a real epilogue to the Aincrad storyline in Book 1. It really feels good to see some old characters in the real world and how they get along after the SAO-Incident, also we see more of my personal MVP Agil.

ShinigamiChaos says

No.

What happened? I used to devour the first book, and now struggling to finish this. Fourth book in the series, four girls "fall in love" with Kirito. Seriously this book pushed me to my limits, the story got dragged on and on with pointless romance. Yaaaa, this guy is so cool, I love him to the moon and back after spending less than a day with him. Yaaaaa, he's my cousin-not-brother, so it's totally OK to love him despite living in the

fuging same house forever. I'm tired, SAO 4 has lost all of it's charm that I love in the first one, and replace them with cheesy teenage love story, which makes up half of it. Suguha, I don't like you, but I don't think it's your fault. Kawahara wasted a character full of potential for the sake of over used sister/brother romance context (and some harem shit). It's the definition of Japanese M/A, the bad one.

Anna says

Continues exactly where last book left off - Kirito's NewGame+ speedrun to reach the 'prize' Fairy Queen locked in her golden cage

This story just isn't as good. Where Aincrad held weight and urgency (while using tropes wisely), ALfheim boils down to "sup hero, do a sorta-timed rescue quest" (while Asuna was reduced to the resident damsel-in-distress NPC)

Too much little sister crush trope (drowning full pages with her mushy-ness... seriously. Sugu-chan, we need to have a serious talk on what '1st cousins' & "onii-chan, daaaisuki" means), failed attempts at a love triangle, some more pages of ALO info~dumps that aren't of much use, and lets not forget the downright prelude-to-hentai that ~~most~~ ALL of Asuna scenes seem to be *shudder* nobody needed that.. with the tentacles.. and the. thing.. nope nope nope noooooooope

Continuing with my Valve-inspired comparisons from last review, the novel ends with a concept of "World Seed" - a mod-making development kit anyone can use "~~Perpetual Testing Initiative~~" & "~~Source Filmmaker~~" "Source SDK" which promises interesting sequels

Conor says

I was disappointed with this book. A great many things combined to give me a bad reading experience. I'm not sure whether I should blame the author or the translator for the awful grammar and clunky sentences, but I can certainly blame the author for the failure of consistent characterisation and the rampant, thoughtless sexism. Asuna, a previously powerful and glorious example of a strong female character, is reduced to the role of a damsel in distress, with thoughts for nothing and no-one but her lover. The whole thing read like a shaky first draft. Honestly, the anime is ten times better than the original novels.

Stephanie M. Allen says

As with the last two SAO books, I knew what to expect with this volume. However, it was nice to get in the heads of the characters. I don't know what else to say except that if you're an SAO fan, you should have read, or plan to read, these books.

John says

Much like with the anime, I really did not enjoy the fairy story compared to the first arc.

Kevin says

This completes the first anime story line. Great read for an SAO fan.

Becca says

Can these really just be getting better and better?! I LOVED this volume of the SAO light novel series! It was really cool being able to experience a couple of new scenes that don't show up in the anime. I love getting extra little details on things and this book definitely delivered on that front. I can't wait to read the next one!

Elsa says

(7/10)

Silvia Piñeiro says

No deja de sorprenderme la gran diferencia que hay entre entre anime y novela, y la verdad es que leyéndolas me gusta todavía más SAO. Me encanta lo que es capaz de transmitir Reki Kawahara, ¡y ya estoy deseando leer el siguiente arco!

Erynne says

Awesome!!!!

Norain says

I have watched the whole season of Sword Art Online and liked it, so I wanted to read the light novel (which, I think, is Japanese own version of YA, only with illustrations). Unfortunately Volume 1 to 3 are no longer available for free online since they have been licensed by Yen Press, and I could not seem to find the side stories. So I proceeded to Volume 4.

Sword Art Online was about a Virtual Reality MMORPG which turned into a life-like death game. Players

needed to wear a Virtual Reality gear called the NerveGear in order to play the game, but through the scheming of its developer the genius Kayaba Akihiko, the players were unable to log out. They were trapped in the virtual world until someone beat the game by clearing all the one hundred floors of Aincrad tower. If you died in the game, an electrical signal would be sent to your NerveGear and you would be killed in the real world too.

Well, that was the basic premise of SAO. Vol 4 however was different because it no longer took place in the world of SAO. Kirito, the protagonist front line player, had escaped from SAO but not his in-game wife cum girlfriend, Asuna. One day he learned that Asuna was trapped in a different game made by the same company that made SAO and he decided to save her by playing the game ALfheim Online. There he met and was helped by another player named Lyfa, who turned out to be his own adopted sister in the real world, Suguha. The whole Season 1 of the anime covered Vol. 1 to 4, so I have already known the plot before I read the light novel.

I liked the world of ALfheim Online more than SAO. In the latter the gameplay was all about wielding swords and harnessing the skill. ALfheim Online on the other hand involved magic and so on, and because it was set in a fairy world, every player could fly. There were a number of different fairy races to choose from and each had special skill that others did not (the Imp for example was the only race that could fly underground). Unfortunately, because the plot of this novel concentrated on Kirito's journey to the World Tree where Asuna was imprisoned, not much of the world was explored - mostly only Swilvane the capital of Slyph race to which Lyfa belonged, and Aarun the city under the World Tree. But since Vol. 4 would not be the end of ALfheim, I sure hoped I would see more of the world.

Reading a free English translation by a non-professional with no editor to do the correcting of course left a lot to be desired. The most annoying thing was the use of many Japanese expressions like 'ara,ara', 'ufufu', 'kukuku' which made me cringe. Watching anime and reading manga in the original, such expression was not weird, but even though the essence of such expressions would be lost if translated in English, leaving it in would not make non-Japanese speakers understand what they really mean. I would rather such expressions be translated to the more 'normal' sounding 'Oi!', 'Eh, really?', 'Haha' or 'Hehe'. Still without it I would be reading SAO and it was free, so I should not be complaining.

The writing style however might leave something to be desired. Sure, a lot of things were lost to translation but there were things that were already bad in the original. Varying the narration from third person to first person could work for some writers but not for Kawahara Reki-sensei. He should have stuck to third person because when he wrote in first person from Kirito's angle, it was as if 'I' was the name of someone and not a pronoun. If you ever read If on a Winter's Night a Traveler you might understand. And almost at the end, there was a very short part where 'I' was not Kirito but Liz. I think it was from the previous volumes, where Liz who was interested in Kirito was given her own angle so readers could understand her from within. But in this volume Liz no longer had such role so there was no point in giving her her own angle anymore.

And finally, to the character Kirito who was godawfully the perfect picture of a good boy, why the heck did every girl seem to fall in love with him? Asuna as the heroine was granted, but there were Silica, Liz and then Lyfa/Suguha who fell in love with her own (adopted) brother. Seeing the cover of the next volume, I feel that more are coming. Yes, I understood that Kirito was strong and nice, and cute if more on the plain site, but surely not every maiden's heart melt for him? And yet they said good guys finished last... Not that I like bad guys myself, mind you.

Overall SAO was a very interesting concept and not a bad read. Japan always came up with such creative ideas but unlike Battle Royale or Dangan Ronpa or Another, SAO was not so bloodthirsty. Yes, it was a

death game but at least it was not about students killing each other. And it advocated a futuristic idea about a virtual world and the extent of its reality. Not to mention it was the cause I, who never played a console game and never a gamer, decided to try playing Ragnarok II Online. Ops...!
