



Sword Art Online, Vol. 02: Aincrad

Reki Kawahara

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Linked up and logged into the deadly VMMORPG "Sword Art Online" in both the real and virtual worlds, Kirito is stuck in a hell of one man's making, and like everyone else, unable to escape until the game is beaten. But while some players are crippled by fear and others throw themselves into completing the game, still others relax into everyday life in the face of their cruel predicament and live to the best of their ability...laughing, crying, but always enjoying the game. Among them are four women who make a mark upon the solo adventurer that Kirito has become: Silica, the beast-tamer; Lisbeth, the blacksmith; Yui, the mysterious orphan; and the tragic Sachi, never to be forgotten by the black swordsman...

Sword Art Online, Vol. 02: Aincrad Details

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Carol says

Two stories I loved, they were absolutely cute and adorable. One was ok, and one nearly broke my heart. It was nice to know the stories of other players around SAO and what happened to them. Although I like Kirito more in the first book, once he grew out of just levelling up for the sake of his ego.

Nerdish Mum says

[particularly Lisbeth, does not come across as some sort of crazy girl, falling for Kirito and becoming obsessed within 24 hours. The light novel explains that she just craves the warmth of a human as she has been lonely for so long

Marianna Rainolter says

Ho preso questo volume pensando di scoprire cosa succederà a nostro Kirito adesso nel mondo reale e pronto a ritrovare la sua Asuna, ma invece mi sono ritrovata con delle storie extra ambientate su Aincraide che hanno per protagonista Kirito, la stessa Asuna e alcuni personaggi secondari molto interessanti (per la cronaca rileggendo la trama lo si dice, si dice che ci sono dei racconti extra e non il proseguo della storia principale, ma l'ho realizzato solo dopo aver iniziato il secondo racconto). Detto questo se amate il mondo di SAO è bello leggere dei suoi personaggi in una maniera alquanto quotidiana, scoprire un lato diverso di loro, fatto di dubbi e di momenti di pace, dove non si combatte e basta. Mi è piaciuto e mi ha divertito, ma adesso devo correre assolutamente a proseguire la storia perché VOGLIO SAPERE!

Becca says

I LOVED this! I really enjoyed getting more detailed looks at how Kirito met and first interacted with each of the four female characters showcased in this light novel. I liked how they each had their own short story. I found it a lot easier getting through the book, having the story being split up into smaller, separate sections. I enjoyed this one more than the previous, and I think that's because it wasn't *quite* as familiar to me as the whole, main arc of the Aincrad plotline.

I also realized how much I enjoy Reki's writing (or rather the translation of his writing). It's fairly simplistic, but there's something about it that gives it a real depth and warmth. His characters feel rather familiar and relatable because of it, and it's easy to get lost in the world and the minds of his characters. It's just really comforting.

I'll definitely be continuing to buy and read Reki's other light novels, as they are released in English, here in Canada.

Aja: The Narcoleptic Ninja says

I liked this one better than the first one because it slowed down and took a more detailed approach to some of Kirito's adventures. This was divided up into four short stories, talking about mid level players instead the high level players like Asuna and Kirito.

The Black Swordsman

This story focused on Silica and her quest to revive her fallen familiar, Pina. I loved Silica and it was really easy to sympathize with someone who felt alienated and alone without her familiar. While Silica was surrounded by people who wanted her to join their party she felt like her only friend was Pina because the players didn't value her strength or personality. They wanted her around because she was a rare class and because she could have served as a sort of mascot because she's cute and one of the few female players in the game. Seeing her get close to Kirito and her dedication to Pina was a nice read and she easily became one of my favorite characters.

Warmth of the Heart

This story revolved around Lisbeth, the blacksmith. She took a tech class instead of fighting in the fields and forges weapons and armor for players like Asuna and Kirito. In searching for rare materials to make a high level weapon for Kirito she develops romantic feelings for him but never tells him because she knows of Asuna's feelings so she encourages Asuna instead. I really liked Lisbeth so I kind of had mixed feelings here. The thing about Asuna is that she's such a poorly developed character in comparison to the girls in this book. She needs her own story to become a more developed character so I can have an actual idea of why Kirito likes her other than the fact that she's pretty and good with a sword...

Morning Dew Girl

Okay, honestly I could have done without this story. I really didn't like Yui at all and the feelings that Asuna and Kirito had about her being their "daughter" felt really forced in my opinion.

Red-nosed Reindeer

Okay it's been mentioned a few times that even though Kirito is a solo-player, he joined a small guild at some point and he blames himself for killing them all. This is that story. Or... kind of. This is the story about Kirito's quest to save Sachi, the only female member of the guild who had vowed to protect and failed. Sachi is a sweetheart and she's scared to death of this game because it can actually kill her which is a nice change of pace from the braver characters we've come to know and love so far. My biggest problem here is that this story could have been so much more. It could have detailed Kirito's time WITH the guild, watching it perish, and THEN going on the quest to save Sachi rather than starting with the quest and just giving a few details about the Guild. It was a nice story, I just wanted more from this one since Kirito is so upset about this particular set of events.

Overall a very nice collection of stories. Definitely enjoyed reading it!

Fiction State Of Mind says

I'm really glad I know what came next in this storyline because this volume does not pick up where the first

one left off. Instead this volume has 4 interconnected stories that showcase the important women in Kirito's life.

The first story stars Silica a young girl who Kirito helps because of her resemblance to Kirito's sister. Next up is Lisbeth a young blacksmith who goes with Kirito on a quest to find a rare material. My favorite story is the third. It tells the story of Yui a young girl who adopts Asuna & Kirito as parents. Lastly we learn the story of Sachi, a member of Kirito first group. Sachi's fate is the defining fact that makes Kirito a solitary player. Wonderful stories with great action and lots of emotional touchstones. I'm looking forward to the next book!

Kevin says

3 1/2 stars, even though I prefer longer fiction, these short novellas are entertaining reading and Morning Dew Girl has a character that's introduced that has a large impact on book 3. So if you plan on reading further you should read at least that side story.

Nikki says

The one in which everyone is in love with Kirito. What the hell, author? Not every female character in existence needs to be in love with your hero.

(Yes, yes I know that one technically isn't in love with him, but they regularly share a bed. Close enough.)

HeyFede ? says

Volume che racconta alcune side story parallele all'arco principale.

Avendo già visto l'anime, nulla di nuovo. Abbastanza noioso, a dire il vero.

Lo stile di scrittura continua a non convincermi, ma non so se dipenda dall'autore o dalla traduzione

Shayan Kh says

It was a good addition to the main story. If you didn't know, it is a flashback. 4 stories that Kirito is involved in. And it is not as good as the first one. In the first book, Asuna is amazing. One of the rare occasions in which the heroine is as important as the hero. And given the fact that the hero is the protagonist, it is quite the achievement. Sure Kirito was stronger than Asuna, but they protected each other the whole time.

But in this book, we are introduced to 4 female characters, and they all like Kirito. I know he is a likable character, he is smart, strong, kind and he doesn't mind sacrificing his life in order to protect others, but come on!

Well maybe I'm biased because I know the rest of the story, but the first one was better IMO.

Sushi (??) says

I love SAO. I am addicted. I can't stop ... I can't wait to read the third book.

Sabrina "Look At My Books" says

The Sachi Story was Just EVERYTHING to me. It was so much more heartbreaking than the Episode.

Oh my poor Kirito.

Anthony Giordano says

"Moving on to Volume 2. I wasn't really sure what to expect in this volume, especially since Volume 1 brought the Aincrad arc to a sufficient close. What Volume 2 actually amounts to is 4 vignettes covering girls that were background characters in the story. Again, since I haven't watched all of the anime, I don't know yet how prominently these girls figure in the show (although Sachi's story, "Red Nosed Reindeer", was the third episode of the show).

The Black Swordsman (49pgs): This story tells how Kirito and Silica the Beast-Tamer first met. This story, to be honest, really isn't that good. Although it is written in the same fun, honest manner, it is just made up of so many "it just so happens" coincidences that it beats your suspension of disbelief over the head. Beast-tamer isn't an official class, but Silica just happens to be one. Monsters don't form emotional bonds with their tamers, but her dragon Pina just so happens to. When it dies; sacrificing itself for her, Silica just so happens to meet Kirito, who just so happens to know about a place to revive it, but it must be done within a time limit set to necessitate urgency, yet allow for some narrative growth. Well, actually, there was some planning afoot in all the meetings; but still, it comes off as a bit corny.

There is conflict, although by this point in the story Kirito is so "OP" that there is no sense of tension, or risk, involved.

The bonding aspect of the story is fun enough. The problem is that, well, Silica is just kind of annoying. She seems nice and honest enough, but teeters off into being impetuous too easily. Of course, she develops a raging crush on Kirito. I mean, this is all fairly rote and tropey; and usually, the SAO stuff is tropes done right. In this case, not so much so. Still a fun enough story.

Warmth of the Heart (60pgs): The second story tells of how Kirito and Lisbeth the Blacksmith became friends. Lisbeth is a teen blacksmith, of unparalleled skill, who is also hardworking, shrewd, and playful in a teasing manner. She is also Asuna's best friend. However, one day, a mysterious swordsman in black walks into her shop, requesting a one of a kind sword.

In the process of testing her wares, Kirito breaks her best custom sword. The two make a pact to search for a mysterious metal, to see if Lisbeth can fashion a unique sword from that.

The rest of the story details their growing friendship. There is a time in the story, when the two of them are trapped for a bit, which is very effective for portraying the need for basic human interaction - and feeling -

that so many trapped in the game are forced to do without.

For all the falseness of the first story, there is a real touching honesty and depth of emotion in this tale. Maybe it's just that I like Lisbeth a lot more as a character than Silica; who knows? Either way, I think that this story is just better written, overall.

The Girl in the Morning Dew (66pgs): This installment tells the story of Yui, a mysterious young girl found in the woods by Asuna and Kirito during their honeymoon. Exploring the woods after hearing rumors of a 'ghost girl' seen lurking therein, they come upon a lost waif, whom they take in and assume a parental role over. This girl looks to be about 8, yet has regressed in speech to a toddler level (they know she can't be that young because NerveGear has strict controls that prohibit anyone under 13 from logging in, which totally explains how Silica was able to do it at 12). This girl is obviously not a 'ghost', or an NPC. However, she doesn't have stats either - so they can't peg if she's a player or not. So, they decide to head to the Town of Beginnings to see if they can locate her guardian.

There are no answers to be found in the Town of Beginnings, but there is a dilemma - the once respectable Army Guild has devolved into something akin to an extortionist mafia. After befriending a young woman running an impromptu 'orphanage' (again, how young are these kids if they aren't supposed to be under 13?), our intrepid couple sets to right things again.

For the bulk of the story, Yui takes a backseat - mumbling the occasional baby-talk. It isn't until the very end - where the situation allows for convenient exposition - that we get to find out what is going on. At that point, the book really tries to shoehorn in an emotional climax. It's a bit forced, to say the least.

This isn't the worst story in the book, but it isn't great. It's fun enough to see the young newlyweds playing at parenthood, and the new characters are decent. That's really all I can say here.

Red-Nosed Reindeer (41pgs): Reki Kawahara truly saves his best for last here. Readers of the first book will remember that perennial lone wolf Kirito did spend some time with one guild, the Moonlit Black Cats. His subsequent lies to them, in withholding the extent of his power, and their resultant death, hang heavily around his neck like an albatross. However, the heaviest cross he bears is in regards to Sachi, a timid young girl who was a member of the MBC. Poor Sachi, whom he promised would not die - whom he promised he would keep alive.

So, yes, Red-Nosed Reindeer tells the story of that doomed guild. It is told in partial flashback format, with the current events centering on Kirito preparing for a special boss quest. The rumor mills have it that when the clock strikes midnight on Christmas Eve, a boss named Nicholas the Renegade will make an appearance, with a bag full of goodies for anyone that can beat him. Best yet, the rumors have it that there might be a resurrection item involved - allowing Kirito to save Sachi, or die the ignoble death he believes he deserves in the process.

Okay, the melodrama is ramped up over 9000 in this story. But, it's all ok, because this is by far the best story in the book. I pondered on that for a bit, and then it hit me - this is the only story told in first-person POV, from Kirito's viewpoint (Warmth of the Heart is the only other first-person POV, but for Lisbeth). Kirito is by and far the heart and soul of this series, and Kawahara is writing on a higher level when he gets inside his head. This story, by far, carries the most gravitas; anger, despondency, and sorrow.

Supporting characterization isn't very strong here; we have an overly emotional appearance by Kirito's friend Klein. Sachi, in the book and in the anime as well, is a pure avatar of the shy, quiet girl that the hero is

compelled to want to "care for". Somewhere, in every man's fragile ego, is the need for validation via a proxy such as this. She was made for this role. The rest of the MBC is barely realized. We don't even get their names, save for Keita (the leader) and Tetsuo (the mace-user). Just reading the book, you might not have any idea what they even look like."

you can read my full review here:

<http://hachisnaxreads.blogspot.com/20...>

Niquie says

What a disappointment. I liked Sword Art Online Aincrad book one, sure it had its flaws, but as it was the author's first book I didn't mind. Not only was the story idea interesting (I love trapped in a game stories), but it was one of the easiest books I have ever read.

So why was book two agony to read?

The main problem was how the book was written. It's a collection of four short stories that take place during the two years the players are trapped in the game. I knew that going in, I was actually excited about learning more about the world of Aincrad and getting a deeper understanding of the characters. Too bad that isn't what happened.

Okay, I did learn more about Aincrad, and I really liked what I learned like the dragon quest, and the idea of monster taming, the Red Noised Reindeer idea was pretty cool and logical. No, where this story let me down was with the characters and the writing.

Take the first story. It's 3rd person pov and narrated by 13 year old Silica, and while the idea was fine, the execution was not. Much like the first book the author has trouble describing villains without making them sound like a joke. Like so:

When she noticed the empty space on Silica's shoulder, a nasty leer crossed her lips.

I hope Kawahara works on developing his villains better, because so far he's doing a cheesy job.

Then there's Silica herself. She's 13, she was 12 when she got trapped in Sword Art Online. As one of the rare female players and a beast-tamer, which is also rare she's a bit of a celebrity. Okay, but was it necessary for her to be sexualized (am I using the right word?)?

Much older men had approached Silica on several occasions, and one had even proposed to her.

Maybe that isn't too bad, but she's 13 and older men are trying to get inappropriately close to her. I honestly was scared until I remember it was mentioned female players could send men who touch them to the dungeon for sexual harassment in the first book.

So Kirito meets her and decides to help her, because she reminds him of his genius kendo younger sister who is actually his cousin (which set off flags in my head, because this is Japan, his younger sister never had a chance but to fall in love with him (view spoiler)).

You know I would have actually enjoyed this story more if Silica, who's 13, didn't fall in love with Kirito. If she just saw him as an older brother figure that would have been fine, but instead I had to read this *she felt warmth in her chest begin to spread* and how she *felt a painful throb deep in her chest. Her heart began beating faster for no apparent reason. Her face was hot.*

It just bothered me. And to think book one made me think maybe this series wouldn't have a harem after all. Which brings me to the second story.

See the second story is narrated in 1st person pov by Lisbeth. Lisbeth is Asuna's friend. The whole plot with the dragon quest I really enjoyed. If this had been a story about Lisbeth and Asuna going after the ore I would have enjoyed it so much more, but no, it was about Lisbeth and Kirito. Lisbeth who avoids forming close relationships with male players because she doesn't want to cross the line with anyone until she finds the guy she truly loves.

I actually admired Lisbeth, she's a blacksmith who chooses to create her own shop and she's good at what she does. But she's lonely. Then she meets Kirito, they go on an adventure, she falls in love, then things get weird.

I'm not fond of harems. But what made this worse was the confusion I was left with by the end of the story. (view spoiler)

I don't know, but somehow the writing in the last chapter felt... confusing and messy. I was also left feeling like Lisbeth was not someone I liked as much.

By the end of this story I was ready to stop reading. I just wanted to put the book down and never look at it again, but something told me I had to read till the end so I continued.

The 3rd story is narrated by Asuna in 3rd person pov. See unlike the first two stories, story three takes place during the events shown in book one. This is a problem, because apparently the events of story three left no impression on Kirito as he doesn't mention anything that happened in it in book one, but mostly because it was so unnecessary.

This story made no sense. The whole explanation behind Yui, was nonsense, Asuna's attachment to Yui felt unrealistic, and the whole idea for the boss in that dungeon made no sense. There were some good things, like learning more about what happened to those left in the Town of Beginnings and what was going on with the Army. I really liked learning about the orphanage that was cool.

But these good things were thrown in in order for the whole Yui storyline to end the way Kawahara wanted it to end. Which is a pity, because those were way more interesting and made more sense than the Yui storyline. I hated this story, it was unnecessary, and it didn't make any sense. It really didn't. The overall execution and writing for this story was lacking.

Then there was the contradiction, not a big deal, but I actually noticed it. In story one this is mentioned:

But the salvation Pina gave to Silica—trapped in the closed world of Sword Art Online at just age twelve
[...]

In story three this is mentioned:

The NerveGear had a cautionary age restriction, meaning that children under the age of thirteen could not use it.

Again no big deal, but this was just one more issue I had with this book.

Then I got to the fourth story. Unlike the first three stories this one is narrated 1st person pov by Kirito, and yeah it was so much better. Kawahara really knows how to write Kirito's voice, and my reading experience went from agony to being enjoyable. This story fleshes out what happened to Kirito's first party and how it affected him (you see in the first two stories he's trying to make amends for his party dying, but there it felt fake).

The idea behind the santa monster quest was really cool. And it made sense considering how the game was supposed to function. Kirito's desperation was good to read, and I could see how this boy is desperately clinging to the belief that somehow he could fix this horrible thing that happened.

In book one I didn't really understand why Kirito felt guilty over not telling his first party the truth about his level, the whole incident was summarized in a few paragraphs and it wasn't really clear what had happened. Here Kirito goes into how he joins the group and explains how even though he was part of the group he was still keeping secrets and the way he described it really did make it seem dirty. He did a bad thing, but I still didn't understand why he felt guilty for the death of his party.

Then we get to the incident, and suddenly Kirito's summarizing again rather than showing what happened. Frankly I'm still confused. I play a lot of JRPGs, and I've come across many a trapped treasure chests, but this trap made no sense (in that context). I could understand a ridiculously strong monster jumping out of the chest and killing the party members before they know what hit them (that's happened to me before ?), but the way it went down was weird.

And isn't it weird that Kirito didn't seem to know or call most of his teammates by their names? It's like they were just filler characters (much like Klein's group of friends).

But ignoring that, I really liked the letter, and the picture at the end really made me feel Kirito's pain. I love Sachi, I wish I'd gotten to get to know her better. Klein's a good guy, wish I'd gotten to know him better too. If the other three stories had been like this one (adding depth to the first book) this book could have been pretty good.

Reading the author's afterword I understand what he was going for, but I think his execution just wasn't good enough. This book was a wasted opportunity. Rather than focusing on random girls who probably won't be seen again, I would rather have read about characters from the first book. And was it really necessary to have Kirito in every story?

Reading this and learning more about Sword Art Online I kind of wish the author hadn't freed everyone by the end of book one. I'd rather he didn't time jump two years and wrote about what happened to Kirito in those two years until he beat the game. There was just so much potential here, that spending a few books on this world would have been nice.

After reading this I've decided to stop buying this series. I didn't enjoy this book (though the last story was so much better), and I can tell from this and things I read online that things I don't enjoy in stories are going to keep appearing in this series. So I've decided to borrow the next book from the library and make my decision then about whether I'm going to drop this series or not. It sucks, I was so looking forward to this.

Now I wrote this review around 12 days after finishing the book (which took me weeks to read) so my memory may be off a bit. Sorry about that.

Final Rating: I didn't like this book. There was so much wasted potential, there were just too many issues I was sensitive to, and the writing was not as good as it should've been. Oh and the third story was a waste of paper. Hopefully book 3 will be better.

Mathil Pooracho says

You know what? I love this world and I have the biggest crush on Kirito, and unlike many people, I ship him with Lisbeth, not Asuna. But this book was not half as good as the other one. I red the first one last summer and I red through it super fast, but this one I had to push myself through it, I forced myself to finish it and FAILED.

I didnt read the last story... No.

I love the world of Aincrad, but I wish he would write how Kirito and Asuna would try and find eachother in real life. Please.

Grace says

First book of 2018 is finished!!!!

In this volume, we get the side stories of things that happened to Kirito while in SAO. It was nice to see how the game affected just regular players and not those who were solely focused on clearing the game. We see more of those who are just trying to continue living and having a purpose. It was also nice to see an outsiders' look at Kirito. Thoroughly enjoyed reading this book ?

Andreas says

I really liked volume 2 because it goes in-depth for a bit. Volume 1 focused on the clearers, the best of the best: Kirito and Asuna. This book told us four stories about mid-level players, players who weren't out fighting at the front line.

The first story, The Black Swordsman, is about Silica and Pina. Because of her reaction to a member of her guild, she ends up being attacked by monsters. Her bird, Pina, is killed. Kirito comes across her and he has heard of a way to resurrect Pina, so they're going to find the place where they can bring Pina back to life. I liked this story, because it shows one's loneliness in this virtual world, but also the determination players have. Silica was determined to bring back Pina.

The second story is Warmth of the Heart. It's about Lisbeth, a blacksmith. Asuna is a customer of hers and Lisbeth knows about Asuna's romantic feelings for Kirito. One day, Kirito goes to Lisbeth and asks for the best sword she can make. They go to a dragon to obtain special materials, and during this adventure Lisbeth develops feelings for Kirito. She knows Asuna likes him though so she never tells him... I found the development of Lisbeth very interesting, but I had mixed feelings about the situation. She's so likeable, and you really start feeling sorry for her.

Morning Dew Girl is the third story and probably the one I like the least. Asuna and Kirito find a child in the woods, Yui. She's very strange and they decide to bring her to their home. Wanting to find her parents, they end up in a church in which a woman helps children who are alone in Aincrad. At that time, the Army, an organization that was supposed to bring peace, is (forcefully) demanding taxing from people. Kirito helps the children but that gets him into another quest the next day, after which they discover who Yui truly is. It's interesting to see how Asuna and Kirito handle such a situation, and especially what kind of different jobs players do that don't involve fighting.

The final story is The Red-nosed Reindeer. It's clear that Kirito is a solo player, but you discover soon enough that he was in a guild before. All the members died in a fight unfortunately, and Kirito blames himself for it. This story tells about Kirito, wanting to save Sachi, a very sweet girl who he promised to protect. There are a few short bits in which Kirito thinks back about her. In those little flashbacks, you start to like her so much. She's a poor girl and you just hope Kirito's quest is going to work out. I did hope to learn a lot more about Sachi and the guild though, so that's a bit of a missed opportunity. It was a nice story overall, but since Kirito is so upset about the whole situation, I'd have loved to learn a little bit more about it.

I really liked the stories and I enjoyed reading it!

Leonard Anthony says

Volume 2 of Sword Art Online is set before the end of Volume 1 (which had Kirito clearing the game). This volume featured four short stories, each one pairing Kirito with a different girl he met during his two years in SAO.

The first story, The Black Swordsman (Aincrad 35th floor, February 2024), features the beast tamer Scilica, and how Kirito helped her restore life to her dragon pet, as well as hunting down some player-killers.

The second story, Warmth of the Heart (Aincrad 48th floor, June 2024), features the blacksmith Lizbeth who forged Kirito's white blade, Dark Repulser.

The third story, Morning Dew Girl (Aincrad 22nd floor, October 2024), features Yui, a strange "girl" who becomes Kirito and Asuna's "offspring" in SAO.

Finally, the last story, Red-nosed Reindeer (Aincrad 46th floor, December 2023), expounds on Kirito's first ill-fated guild, The Black Cats of the Full Moon, and his quest for redemption after the TPK of the said guild.

The stories are top-notch, so if you liked Volume 1, this volume is a must-read. A couple of the stories, particularly the ending of Warmth of the Heart as well as the Rudolph song sequence in Red-nosed Reindeer, are definite tear-jerkers, underlining just how much sadness there can be in this life and death VMMORPG.

Dan says

Short stories, set before and during the events of Book 1. Kirito hangs out with the newbies. Creative, but after a while it gets a tiny bit weird how Kirito is hanging out with a different (female) newbie in each story.

Joost says

Sword Art Online is één van mijn favoriete anime. Ik ben daarom begonnen met een verzameling van de boeken en manga. Ik las het tweede deel in de novelles van het verhaal in Sword Art Online en ik kan niet wachten om er meer van te lezen!

<http://nerdygeekyfanboy.com/recensie/...>
