

ELUZŃ

BY MONKS & KARMA

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ELUZN

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<http://eluzn.com/>

This book is dedicated to *Aniel*
and all of the Paracletes
that walk with us for a while
on our journey home
we are forever grateful
for your company and grace

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Chapter 1
Bailamos
(Shall we dance?)

Esta noche bailamos
Te doy toda mi vida
Quedate conmigo
Tonight we dance
I leave my life, in your hands
We take the floor
Nothing is forbidden anymore

-Bailamos,
Single by Enrique Iglesias



The room is dark and shadows cast strong on the faces of the couples dancing in the center of the club. Light reflections from a shattered glass disco ball cut through the crowd and the mood lighting changes from dark blue to deep purple in time with the rhythm of the song playing from mega speakers that surround the dance hall. *“I want your drama, the touch of your hand”* echoes against the high ceiling. Lady Gaga at first may not seem to be a suitable mix for the tango but the club goes embrace the heavy bass and drum loops, executing adornos in perfect step with the modern riffs.

On a particularly dark edge of the inner circle of dancers is a couple set apart from the crowd. The man has an open black silk jacket that slides across his shirtless chest as he atrás across the floor. The edge of his top falls away and you can see the outline of a tattoo over his heart. The lady he is holding has her eyes on his pecs, as if the ink of the dragon is breathing the fire she feels in her core. Her long hair cascades around her shoulders and nearly touches the floor as he dips her slowly down, counterbalancing the weight of his pelvis against her inner thigh. Their eyes meet and for a moment there is a breathless pause as the uncertainty looms and each consider the next step.

She feels his strong hand against the skin of the small of her back. The low cut teal polyesterdex dress clings to her curves. He raises her slowly as if pulling her up by the power of his eyes alone, then just as she is inches from his lips

he spins her away and embraces her from behind. She can feel his hips guiding her as they sway in quebrada, before resuming the basic paso of the tango.

“Te amo Nina,” he whispers in her ear.

“Te amo Guapo,” she returns in a breathless hush.

“It is almost time ...” his voice drops and trails off as if there was more to say but never spoken.

Abruptly she stops, “Thank you for the dance. You have a good night.” Without another word the man leaves the room. The next song the DJ plays is a slow ballad by Garth Brooks, the woman sits at the bar alone and listens to the lyrics.

♪♪ And now I'm glad I didn't know
 the way it all would end the way it all would go. ♪
 Our lives are better left to chance
 I could have missed the pain ♪
 But I'd have had to miss the dance. ♪ ♪

'How will this dance end?' she wonders, as she lets her mind run through all the myriad of possibilities. She can feel the moisture build on her lower eyelids as she realizes most of the scenarios end in pain and she asks herself, *'Would I choose to avoid the pain if it meant that I would miss this dance?'* She could still imagine the feeling of his fingertips pressing into the small of her back. His voice would hold her captive and his silence kept her coming back.

'What was it about the dance that was so intoxicating? Was it the music or the movement?' she wonders. Images of snake charming, and the pied piper flash in her mind as the sound track to Armageddon played in the club. *I Don't Wanna Miss a Thing*. The chorus seemed to have an endless reverb inside her head. The music moves between her right and left ear. Her heart seems to sych with the heavy drum beat, as if every cell in her body was on fire and she remembers the blaze and flames at the end of the movie as the hero died.

At once she places both hands up to her head and removes the earphones she was wearing and closes her computer ... with that her world ended.



Dot looked across the room to see the digital clock on the cable box next to the television in her bedroom. It was 4:17 p.m. and her body was just beginning to approach the *easy* period of the day when the dysfunction of her autonomic system would seem almost manageable, at least relatively speaking since the mornings brought such disorder and seemed to last much longer now than they did when she was younger and managing a chronic illness. Dot could see her heart rate monitor signal that her pulse was slightly elevated even for her normal POTS (Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome) peaks. But she chalked it up to being excited to see her daughter who would be coming home from college for fall break. Dot pulled up the United Airs tracking page to watch Jillie's flight as it approached LAX. She did the mental math, touching her finger tips lightly to subtract the minutes from the hour and smiled to herself that soon she would be able to hug her only child and for the week at least the empty part of the nest would be filled with her laughter.

Dot pressed ALT-TAB to switch to another window on the screen where there was an image of a half naked 3D cartoon, posing on the left side of her display. The sexy creature had full breasts, tiny waist, and a gold micro g-string atop very slender legs that were sporting sparkling open toe stiletto sandals. Dot clicked the mouse a few times on the right side menu and a gold bikini top appeared on the avatar, which Dot referred to as "avaho" (avatar + whore) given her curves and lack of attire.

Seemingly satisfied with her creation, Dot clicked the Save and Upload buttons to submit her clothing product into the virtual catalog for this click therapy addiction that helped her pass time during the quiet moments of the day. If Lila was the game of choice for the new age zealots, ELUZN was playground for the dark side of the light chasers. Unlike the cute, cartoon features of the characters in Lila, ELUZN provided lifelike models with accentuated sensual features that you could customize to the preferences of your own fetish or fantasy.

Dot knew about the fiction and fallacies of online communities from her years in Lila. Though physically frail, she considered her mind immune to

the game play hooks and *playas* that feed upon the innocent in online communities. So when a woman she met in Lila at a healing meditation told her that she should consider joining ELUZN, Dot didn't give a second thought about entering a new world, especially when she spoke with Chris and he told her that he was already there.

So much had changed in the last few months Dot could hardly believe it had only been one year.



YOU HAVE BEEN INVITED TO JOIN THE ELUZN,
AN ONLINE SOCIAL ENTERTAINMENT
COMMUNITY WHERE MEMBERS USE 3D
AVATARS TO MEET NEW PEOPLE, CHAT, DESIGN,
HAVE FUN AND EXPLORE.



'I wonder why Chris didn't tell me about ELUZN before?', Dot wished she had remembered the kind woman's name that she met at the Kundalini healing meditation in Lila yesterday. But she didn't add her to the game buddy list and Dot's middle-aged memory was already full of irrelevant bits of memorabilia, that if she didn't write something down in the moment, it would never find its way to her hippocampus. What Dot did recall was the name ELUZN. Perhaps it was her own phonetic dyslexia but she enjoyed the play on words and asked her friend Chris if he was familiar with the game.

"Its not really a game, Dot," Chris explained. "Its more like a grown up version of Lila, but without any of the sugar coating or distractions."

"How long have you been there? And why didn't you tell me about it?"

"Oh, sometime now. And I really didn't think it would be your cup of tea."

"I met a sweet lady at this Kundalini awakening group yesterday and she suggested that I check it out. But if you think its not worth my energy ..."

"No, come. You can see for yourself if there is anything there for you."

The draw for Dot about Lila was the ability to interact with her online sangha. Unable to go out and visit with people in her real life, she was could still establish real connections with online people that fulfilled a need for community which was missing in her life in the years after she left teaching.

But Dot knew ELUZN would be a different adventure when she accepted her invitation and began to build her new alter ego. In Lila, the bobble head cartoons had if not innocent features, then decidedly benign qualities compared to the buxom Barbie dolls in ELUZN. Even as a noob, Dot's online knowledge base helped her to navigate around the new world. She found a pair of open toe sandals, some faded jeans and a tie dye shirt with a peace sign on it for her first outfit. She was pleased to see several silver hair styles that she could purchase with her welcome gift tokens, and within minutes she found herself looking at a mini-me-perfect-10-perpetually-29 cartoon version of herself. Chris was waiting for her to join the community and after giving her sufficient time to *find herself*, he sent her an invitation to a club called **Woodstock Lives Forever**. Even before Dot's avatar finished loading the room, her speakers blared the disco hit "Freak Out" and Dot could sense her pulse jump.

Dot felt at once like her namesake after landing in Oz, as ELUZN was certainly no Lila. There was nothing "cartoon" about this new playground. It looked like a real life dimly lit night club, with lights flashing, fog rising from the floor and a crowd of 90210 ideal bodies all gyrating in perfect time to the music. There were flower powered orange daisies with magenta pistons on the black walls. Translucent blue spot light tubes accented the dance floor that was bottom lit like a crazy rotating Rubik's cube. Dot looked around for her friend Chris, but didn't see anyone with his familiar salt-n-pepper short hair. She found a floating zen cushion to the side of the dance floor and clicked on it, then watched in fascination as her avatar began to actually *walk* across the room.

Before Dot reached the zafu, a pink giant cat-like man stopped her and picked her avatar up off the ground in a big bear hug. Dot was stunned for a moment, then a blank chat bubble appeared above the pink cat's head and soon the familiar words of her friend,

"Welcome Dot," the furry greeted. When Dot moused over Chris' furry avatar, the name *Conway Kitty* appeared over his head.

“Nice to meet you Mr. Conway,” Dot returned.

Chris typed LOL and at once Dot could *hear* the chortle of a deep baritone and she sat up a bit taller, startled by the noise.

“Oh my goodness!” Dot typed quickly. “This place is SIR-REAL, LOL.” Before the two old friends could continue their conversation, a blue fox appeared next to Conway and the two avatars embraced in long hug that swayed gently back and forth.

“Who is the new meat?” the fox posed.

“Hush, now FoulFellow Dot is a friend of mine, she's married and doesn't play cat and mouse,” Chris established in quick order as Dot wondered about the irony of an animal analogy.

The fox bowed deeply to Dot then smirked, “ELUZN is the ultimate laser pointer that no cat can resist. If you stay, you WILL play.” Then a loud and evil sounding laugh echoed in Dots speakers, drowning out the disco music playing in the background.

“Its all a game,” Dot replied with confidence. “I'm well aware of the metaphoric illusions and the thin ice that lies hid in the snow Mr. FoulFellow.”

With a raised eyebrow, the fox pointed his finger directly in front of Dot's face and warned, “No one can be prepared for the impact that the darkness has on their night vision. Play at your own risk!” And in a puff of blue smoke and the sound of wind blowing through autumn leaves, his avatar vanished.

“Well, that was some welcome wagon. LOL,” Dot laughed to her former colleague who she would now try and remember to call Conway Kitty instead of Chris in order to respect the cloak he chose to wear in this virtual alternative world. “And how did he know I was new to the game?”

“He's a character on many levels, yes. And, he could read your ID card by clicking the right mouse button when hovering atop your avatar.”

Dot experimented with the new command and placed the tip of her cursor on top of Conway's head, then tapped the right touchpad button on her laptop. A mini pop-up window appeared on her screen with a picture of Conway and FoulFellow in a tight embrace in the upper left. On the right side was information about her colleague's avatar including the date he joined the game, the last time he logged in, the name of the room he was currently playing in and a long narrative paragraph of turn-ons and turn-offs. There was also a section where the end-user could list their marital status and sexual orientation. It was there that Dot's eyes grew wide as she saw her old friend listed "bisexual" for his lifestyle selection. Dot began to understand why Chris had not invited her to ELUZN before and for a moment she felt bad that she may have pushed him into a conversation he wasn't prepared to have with her. She thought quickly for something to say that might break the ice.

"So you're a gay kitty! Wasn't it bi-curiosity that killed the cat?"

"Oh you are punny DottedLine," quipped Conway, using the full name that Dot had selected for herself in this sandbox.

"I really wasn't prepared to think up an avatar name on the spot, after seeing that Dot and Gaia were both taken. This game forces a much longer moniker than I am use to assuming. And if what you are all saying about this being the Caligula to Lila, then a broken line seemed like a good fit." Dot hovered over Conway's avatar again and saw a small menu appear that offered a "whisper-chat" option. She clicked the covert conversation link and continued in private to her friend, *"I'm doing my best to be politically correct here, but I don't want to ignore the pink elephant. Did you not want me here in ELUZN because you didn't want to tell me that you are a closeted gay furry?"*

Conway replied to her back in private chat mode, *"You were NEVER politically correct, :) And yes I was worried about bringing you here because I didn't want things to be strained between us. I didn't know how to tell you that I was gay since I've kept my lifestyle private from the campus community. I'm actually so very relieved now that its out in the open."*

"I'm sure my mind will create some noise about you not trusting me enough to share this with me," Dot began, *"but in this moment, I'm probably just a bit stunned and genuinely happy for you. I always wondered why it was that you didn't remarry, and I so hoped that you'd find someone to share all that is in your*

heart.” Dot fumbled for a moment moving her mouse around and clicking random menus until she found the actions tab where she could select a friendship hug. Then she watched as the 3D image of herself gently embraced this oversized pink Persian.

“Is this a public club?” Dot asked her friend in open chat.

“Yes and it's run by Raven. He's over there dancing alone which is unusual given the number of groupies he has. LOL” Dot used her laptop touchpad to spin the room around until she saw a tall avatar with dark shades and spiked dark hair at the far end of the club. When Dot hovered her pointer in his direction she saw a yellow dot light up indicating that she could move her avatar to that spot. Clicking next to Raven, Dot instantly appeared on the hip hop dance as his partner.

“ello,” Raven typed after a short pause.

“Hi, I just wanted to say you have a nice club.” Dot noticed that her avatar was slightly out of step with the dance.

“May I sync?” Raven asked.

“What?” Dot didn't understand the reference. But the next thing she knew her avatar was bending at the waist and bowing deeply to Raven who was also bowing back to her. After which, both dancers were in perfect time with each other and seemingly with the music that was now a song by Dr. Hook.

Before Dot could ask another question a large BOOM came through her speakers and a mushroom cloud of changing colors rained over the top of the two avatars.

“Wow! That was really cool,” Dot smiled to herself as she zoomed her camera angle in to take a closer look at her dance partner.

A pink whisper-chat from Conway appeared on the screen letting Dot know that he was headed out to go back to FoulFellow's private home. He asked if she wanted to join them but Dot opted to stay and dance a bit more before she logged off for the night.

Another serious of lights and sound FX came from Raven's avatar and Dot giggled like a school girl watching the star quarter back. She was surprised that the flashing lights were not making her dizzy in the moment and she was grateful that she could enjoy the music which reminded her of easier days.

“vgs,” Raven typed.

“Beg pardon?”

“very good song,” Raven explained. Exile's *Kiss You All Over* was playing on the club mix. Dot could remember listening to this on an 8-track at full throttle when she went driving in her mother's red gremlin.

“Yes, it is :)” When Dot typed an ascii smiley face she noticed that her avatar paused for a moment and smiled in Raven's direction. At once Dot worried that perhaps she was being too forward, and she moved her hands away from the keyboard until she built up her courage again.

Dot right clicked on Raven's avatar to read his ID card. He was listed as married, which she felt was a relief as she didn't come Looking for Mr. Goodbar. “I see you've been in ELUZN for over a year,” Dot attempted to strike up a conversation with her very silent dance partner.

“On this account ;)” Raven replied with a wink.

“Oh! Why would you have more than one account?” Dot's ignorance was clear.

The voice box Raven used had a loud and long laugh. He waited for it to finish before replying, or perhaps he was thinking up his reply. “I use this account for designing.” And with that Dot saw a white box with a bold red ribbon fly across the screen and land at her feet. Before she could click on the package the ribbons appeared to untie and the box opened to reveal a gift card that read:



YOU HAVE RECEIVED A RAVE COLUMN BY DESIGNER: RAVEN



Then with a BOOM a large cone shaped light show appeared around Dot's avatar.

“Oh WOW!” Dot was genuinely impressed. “You MADE that pyrotechnic? I'm seriously in awe.”

“ye,” Dot could tell that Raven wasn't much for small talk, which suited her fine, since she mostly just enjoyed watching her little character dance and was happy simply listening to the music. “You got your real life pic on your profile,” Raven noted.

“Yes I put it up there. Thought maybe there'd be a chance to talk about my vegetarian cookbook here, you know drum up a few sales.”

“That's not what you'd drum up here in ELUZN. And if you were my woman, I wouldn't let you put up your real life pic.”

Dot was taken aback by Raven's comment and had begun to formulate a defense when she noticed the time. She had been dancing with Mr. Raven for hours, well past the time she was usually in bed and it seemed they were now the last two patrons in the club.

“Oh gosh, Mr. Raven, I am so very sorry, I didn't notice the time. Thank you so much for the dance, I really had a wonderful night.” Dot searched her action list for the bow gesture. “I hope we can talk sometime about what programs you use to make products for ELUZN. May I add you to my friend list?”

“You wouldn't ask if you knew what I looked like in real life,” the silent avatar replied.

Dot was stunned for a moment, as her new friend broke the fourth wall. Then she heard that long and low voice box laugh. Perhaps, she thought, he was joking with her. Nonetheless she felt compelled to respond. “I realize you don't know me from soybeans, so let me say upfront - you are welcome to tell me anything or nothing at all about yourself. What I learn thru my illness is everyone suffers on some level and I'm not unique. So what I bring to the table is a place of unconditional compassion for everyone.”

Raven didn't respond, but rather sent Dot a friend request. Which she silently accepted.

“Good night, Mr. Raven.”

“tc ttyls”

Before leaving, Dot copied the chat log to her notepad, and as a first order of business looked up Raven's closing line. (Take Care, Talk To You Later) Wondering why there was an S after later and feeling very OLD to be bothered by the fact that there was.

There was an appeal to ELUZN for Dot, perhaps seeing her avatar walk and dance reminded her of a time when she could move without the pain and dysfunction of her own body that found it hard to even sit upright on her bad days. And while Lila was familiar, she had grown tired of the same old work-a-day decorating and game playing and the prospect of actually using her creative and technical brains to make products in the ELUZN world was most certainly a carrot for her academic egoic mind. And as Dot closed her eyes and put her head down on the pillow she could hear a montage of disco tunes inside her head. *'Hmmm, if Woodstock Lives On, maybe I can find a second life too,'* she thought as she drifted off to sleep with KC and the Sunshine Band.



When Dot awoke in the morning she reached for a small lunch bag beside her and pulled out a thermos of cold milk. She sipped on it slowly to try and stabilize her morning blood sugar as she turned on her laptop and waited for the various Microsoft ticking, swirling, status bars to complete. She thought to herself that she should review the applications loading in her start-up menu because the laptop seemed painfully slow to boot. But she had that thought every morning, and always seemed to get distracted by something else once she was free to roam the chrome.

Dot opened her Firefox browser and Googled information on becoming a designer in ELUZN. She was excited to see that some of the software programs used to create products were already ones that she was familiar with from what she now referred to as her *previous life* in higher education. Dot

went on to read about the terms and conditions that designers had to adhere to in order to publish their work. There was a rating system much like that in the movie industry. E was for clothing and products that were suitable for everyone 13 years and up, as 13 was the youngest age you were allowed to join the community. MP were products that were intended for people over 18, what might be considered R at the theater or M on the video game rating system. Then there was XP which was the most restrictive product rating that seemed to imply it was X-rated material. You not only had to be over 21 but you also had to purchase an XP pass on an annual basis in order to have access to this genre of game play.

'I remember when XP refereed to the new version of Windows, which means I am perhaps too old to be playing this game,' she mused, then after briefly checking her mail messages and looking to see who was online on Facebook, Dot loaded up ELUZN and began going through some of the new member tutorials. On one screen there was an intrusive app that offered to help her find people from her Facebook friend's list who were playing ELUZN, and while Dot was typically cautious about cross-linking her personal data, she found herself clicking the ACCEPT button before she realized the invasion of privacy behind the request. In a few seconds Dot saw a list of ELUZN ID pictures in a two column table with adjoining Facebook profile photos on the right side of the screen. She was surprised to see several of her Lila game friends had joined the dark side.

'So that's where Morgane has gone,' Dot thought to herself. *'I wondered why she hasn't been playing in the Lila lately. And why on earth would Gnani be here! I can't see this as a place to hold satsang.'* Dot was surprised to see that Gnani was using the same name on ELUZN as he did in Lila then noticed that he was indeed an old timer with a registration date of more than five years ago. When she hovered over his ID pic, a popup window displayed his profile card information. It listed an ELUZN wife named Aniel which was another name for Angel or Grace. *'How fitting,'* Dot smiled.

There was a check box next to each table row where you could select and send a buddy request in ELUZN. Dot clicked on Morgane's name as well as Gnani and Satan – who was going by XxXSatanXxX in this adult cartoon world. *'Wow, who knew? I haven't heard from Satan in years. I wonder if he still has horns here in ELUZN, oh heck I probably shouldn't even pull that*

metaphoric thread.' Dot quipped as she clicked the SEND button to connect with her old friends.

In a moment Dot received a flash on her screen that Morgane had accepted her friend request, followed by a pop-up window saying she was invited to join the room **Isle of Avalon**. Dot clicked the JOIN button before reading the room description or rules and found herself surrounded by a crowd of medieval cloaked cartoons in what looked to be an old castle setting. She stood silently on her landing spot feeling conspicuously out of place in her jeans and peace shirt. She used her mouse to pivot the room so she could take a look around. There was a balcony on her left that seemed to be overlooking a vast ocean. The waves were moving in the water with rhythmic white caps that floated to the shore. The sky was filled with the colors of an enchanted sunset and there were candles all around that cast a glow as if there was a subtle fog in the room. Whereas everything in Lila seemed to be somewhat flat, the perception of distance was a notable difference in ELUZN. Objects on the horizon seemed almost out of focus until you zoomed in closer. And there seemed to be real shadows that moved and created the perception of depth all around.

"{{Post your entrance}}," a man dressed in a cloak, tunic and leggings of rich velvety red and gold chatted.

"{{DottedLine is new to ELUZN, she probably doesn't RP}}," Morgan2U replied. "Everyone, please we are going to take a moment of OOC, that's Out of Character Dot, you don't need to use {{ }} until we go back in play".

Before Dot could Google the rules of role play she saw that her avatar was hugging a stunning woman with long auburn hair, wearing a saffron gown draped with a deep green velvet cloak that had a burgundy interior.

"Welcome dear friend of long standing. Hugs. It is so good to see you." Dot performed the only action she knew, and bowed deeply to her old friend. "This is my family," Morgane continued. "We come here everyday and role play in our little medieval fantasy world."

"Very nice to meet everyone, warm smile," Dot began. "I wish I knew how to Post an entrance, but unfortunately I seem to be fresh out of Post-It notes and perhaps as well my middle aged mind. :)"

There was a flurry of laughing sounds as the guests typed a range of things from LOL, Ha, hehe and LMAO which seemed to trigger several sound byte files that created the illusion of an actual crowd of people. “Oh its not too hard, I can send you some T1 links if you'd like to join our family. You are a quick sprite Ms. Dot, I remember. You'll catch on to the rules here in no time at all.”

Dot was busying opening up another tab which had the rules of engagement for T1 role playing. It was indeed another world all of its own. '*Hmmm ...*' Dot imagined, '*Knowing the rules may not change the game, but NOT knowing the rules could be hazardous to your health.*'

“To be honest Ms. Morgane I'm not really sure what it is that I'm doing here in ELUZN. A friend invited me yesterday and I've started to read up on becoming a Designer. I rather think staying on the periphery of play may keep me out of trouble. LOL”

Another round of gaphaws from the actors in the room followed before a man in a regal looking red robe spoke, “Oh we could use a good medieval tailor, Lady Dot, I do wish you much success in your new venture.”

Dot used her bow gesture. “It looks like you have quite a few very talented designers here. This place is amazing.”

“tyvm,” Morgane replied. “It's certainly worlds beyond Lila, yes Ms. Dot?”

“Oh my yes. I can see that already. This place is very high tech.”

“Well, not only that, but everything seems to be kicked up a notch here. The dress, the UNDESSING, the fantasies and the fetishes.”

“Oh well, we had furrries and dating events in Lila, Lady Morgane. How bad could this be?”

“As BAD as you want it, Lady Dottie ;)” responded a knight in the teal cape. Dot clicked on the avatar's ID card, he was called King RolandXX, male from NewZealand. His tag line read “In the dark, your eye begins to see ...” He listed himself as straight and interested in dating. Dot was puzzled by the relationship status listed as “Other”. '*What does other mean? Some kind of*

polite way to infer that you're married but not going to discuss it? This is a strange little world,' Dot thought.

“She's married, Roland and she doesn't role play that way,” Morgane warned. This was the second time one of Dot's friends had rushed to her defense to block a come-on which puzzled her as she didn't consider herself in need of sheltering. Dot selected the bow action and watched her avatar bend deeply at the waist toward Morgane, “A thousand thank yous Lady Morgane for coming to the rescue of my virtue, I may be new to the kingdom, but I assure you I am skilled in ol' skool self defense.”

There was a long pause in the rping room, and Dot wondered if she had offended the kiwi king. She was about to offer an apology but Morgane picked up the thread “The Old Skool of New Age. LOL” Morgane's avatar bent at the waist and wailed her hands in a slap knee laughing gesture. “Nothing wrong with a little retro,” winked King RolandXX.

“Speaking of retro, I was at some Woodstock room yesterday ... talk about flashbacks,” Dot tried to gently change the subject.

“Oh you must have met Raven,” Morgane said with a raised eyebrow. “If you were able to keep his octopus arms off of your avi, then you'll be fine wandering the streets of ELUZN, because he's a smooth criminal.”

“Still chasing the dragon are we Morgane?” RolandXX snickered.

“NEVER!” Morgane shouted in caps. “As IF I would be willing to take a number at that meat market and wait in line with all his feathered flockers. I hear he won't even ELUZN date unless you have a HIGH-DEF web cam and know how to use it. LOL”

Dot wondered if she had met the same man they were referring to and if he WAS such a player as they all seemed to say, then why hadn't he made a pass at her last night. Maybe her real life picture put him off. He was a much younger man and was probably in to *girls* half his age, she imagined. Then she smiled to herself at the assumptions she was making at warp speed.

'In the absence of information, we make up our own story,' Dot reminded herself.

“Oh my, by the sound of it I should consider myself lucky to have left with my virtual virginity in tact!” Dot joked.

“If you let me walk you home, I can take care of that personally.” Roland selected an action on Dot's avatar only to find himself bounced off of an invisible wall. Morgane laughed, “I see you put on your BLOCKS straight away Ms. Dot, you are clearly on top of your game even as a newcomer.”

“To be honest when I read that list of cooperative actions, I couldn't even see why I'd want one of my FRIENDS doing those to me, let alone a stranger. So I went through and blocked most everything.”

“Is that like SAFE SEX?” Roland joked.

“Perhaps prudent avoidance,” Dot typed quickly.

“Very good, I see you don't back down,” Roland smiled in Dot's direction.

“No I walk away and meditate,” Dot bowed and moved to a spot closer to Morgane. “Thank you for letting me stop by and visit, I am sorry I interrupted your role playing story. Perhaps one day we can find a tea house in this playground and catch up a bit.”

“I know several,” Morgane smiled, “And I hope you know you are always welcome Ms. Dot wherever I am, whenever I have my light on.” Morgane referred to the directory listing of her online location which was a public variable setting that players could turn ON or OFF depending on their desire to be located.

“Thank you again. Deep bow and warm smile,” Dot clicked the X in the ELUZN tab window and quickly closed the room. As she let out a long exhale, Dot felt her shoulders drop down from up around her ears. After leaving the medieval world she could feel the muscles in her body begin to relax slightly, she became aware of the tension she must have been holding during the 3D chat and she knew that she would have to be much more aware of her tendency to breath hold the next time she entered this virtual reality.

The familiar soft sound of a technology rain drop let Dot know that she had received a message on Facebook.



GOOD TO HEAR FROM YOU MS. DOT. DON'T HAVE TIME TO CHAT BUT SAW YOUR FRIEND REQUEST AND WANTED TO LET YOU KNOW THAT I DON'T PLAY ELUZN ANYMORE. AND IF I MAY BE SO BOLD I MIGHT SUGGEST THAT YOU STAY IN LILA FOR AS LONG AS YOU POSSIBLY CAN.

BEST INTENTIONS, SATAN



Dot wished her old friend would have elaborated about his warning to avoid this new world, and made a mental note to follow up with him soon. No this place was not like Lila. There were no artificial jobs to do or score cards to level up in some kind of pseudo game. Here people made up their own games, no doubt with an ever changing set of rules and consequences. She wondered if there was a common thread that brought people to ELUZN or if anyone ever found what they were looking for in the role playing battles and war zones of the heart. Dot was excited yet leery to take on a new adventure even before Mr. Satan's ominous advice. Her health had declined significantly since her early days in the Lila and she tended to be cautious about over extending any of her resources in fear she would continue to slide further into the POTS hole of her illness. And though her mind wanted to continue to research and read about becoming a designer in ELUZN, she realized that she had already depleted her energy checkbook for the morning and she would need to close her laptop until she once again could move her shoulders with at least *less* pain than she currently felt throbbing in her bones.

Looking out the window, Dot could see a small flock of buntings had found her platform feeder and she decided to go outside and recline in her zero gravity chair on the backyard patio. Even a few years back, Dot would have been able to sit zazen unsupported on a rock near her water garden. But as the years took their toll so did the pain in her joints and as a result the zafu had become untenable. She felt her formal meditation practice of more than a dozen years, slipping away. But somehow she didn't fight to cling to the past. Instead Dot continued to adapt to her circumstances, buying a comfortable reclining chair where she could sit with less pain and she could still experience the "peace" that her formal meditations had offered her. She

had let go of the hope that her Zen practice would “save” her as she realized the data simply didn't support that dream. At times it was a bitter pill to swallow, but she also felt the Grace in surrendering to what WAS instead of trying to hold on to something that was an illusion. Illusion. ELUZN. Dot didn't know why she was drawn to this new virtual world, but as she watched the lazuli buntings peck through the milo looking for the tender white millet morsels she knew that there was something there worth exploring. Dot jumped in her seat at the sound of a large black crow calling as it flew overhead startled her. *'What was Raven's story?'* Dot wondered to herself. Then directed her attention back to the buntings and remembered that the pieces would all fall into place in time, but that PEACE could only be found in THIS moment. In THIS breath. And she smiled down to the birds in gratitude for reminding her to come back to the Now.

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