

This is a story that  
might have taken place in Aincrad...

Free!

Read it here in  
this 43 page  
prologue comic!

**SWORD ART ONLINE**

ソードアート・オンライン

*—Integral Factor—*

Prologue Comic

Manga: **Yu Uonuma** Original Work: Reki Kawahara  
Character Design: abec

Story Direction: BANDAI NAMCO Entertainment

Aim to beat all 100 floors with your friends in the Assault Team!

# SAO:IF Key Features!



## Combat skills are key!

Select action commands to move your character.  
Team techniques like the Switch can make combat exhilarating and fun!



↑ You can even learn your favorite characters' techniques.



↑ Optimize your equipment with a wide variety of weapons and armor.



↑ Explore vast Aincrad with players from all over the world.



## Your choices will change the course of SAO!

You and your partner Koharu are the heroes of this particular tale.  
Together, you'll explore Aincrad and see its story unfold around you.



↑ Clearing a floor unlocks new encounters and events. Experience another side of the original SAO story, along with original tales!

← Best of all, your intervention will change SAO's story. And you may even see some unexpected faces!



## Tons of original art and illustrations!

Note: Images and game content are currently in development.

# Introduction

In 2022, a genius by the name of Akihiko Kayaba created the first FullDive VRMMORPG: Sword Art Online.

However, this game has a terrifying secret:  
You can't log out until the game is beaten,  
and dying in game means death in real life...

This is the story of a player trapped in this deadly game,  
dreaming of conquering Aincrad. Your story.

# Characters

## Protagonist

The story's lead character, and a former SAO beta tester. Take control of this hero in the making and explore the deadly world of SAO.



## Koharu

The SAO beta was the first VR game Koharu ever played, and she befriended you after you taught her how to fight there. The two of you promised to reunite when SAO officially launched.



Kirito



Asuna



Klein



Agil



Diavel



Sachi



Argo



Kibaou

...and many more!



Koharu!  
It's coming  
for you!



Oh  
come on,  
I'm better  
now!



Yeah.  
At least  
you didn't  
fall over  
this time.

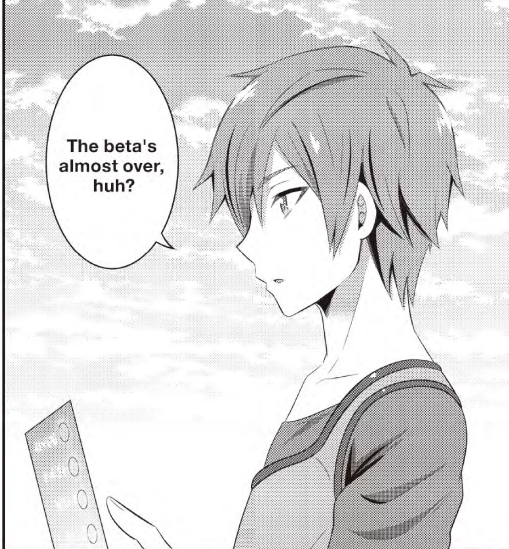


So,  
that was  
good,  
right?!

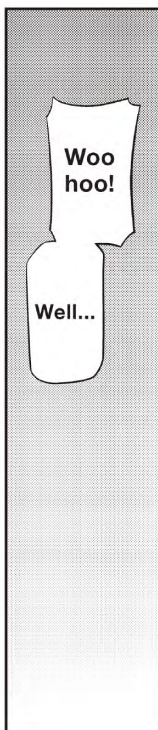




Yeah...



The beta's almost over, huh?



Woo hoo!

Well...



So, hey... Will you play with me again after its release?

Sure. I'd love to.



Alright! I'm gonna do great in the full game!



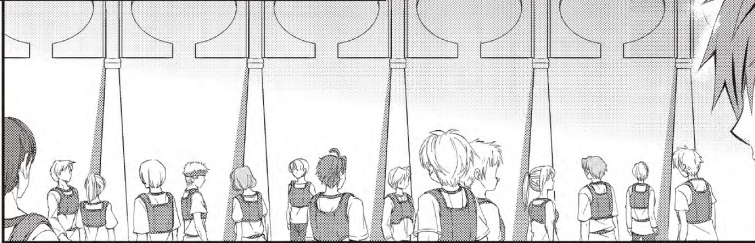
See you!



"See you,"  
huh...?

**Link Start!**

**SAO: Release Day**




Ah!

There  
You are!

It was  
hard  
finding  
you!

There's way  
more people  
than during  
the beta.

Phew!  
I worked up a  
sweat!



I'm still terrible at fighting. More lessons, please?



We should've picked a meeting place.

For sure.

Sooo, I have a favor to ask...



Seriously?



So, Why not!

Well, We got time now.

Thanks!



Yeah, but it was only two months!

Didn't you fight a lot in the beta?

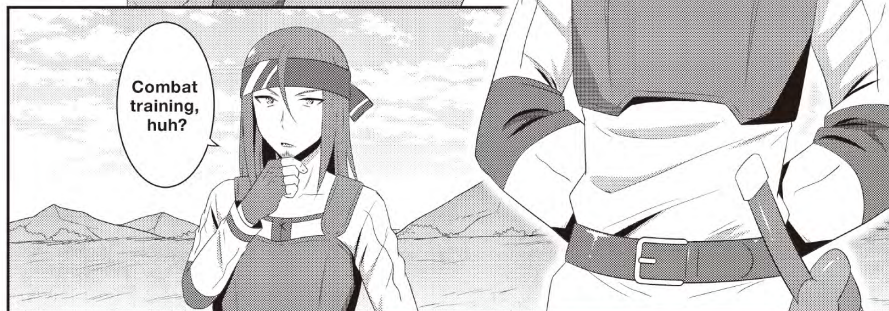




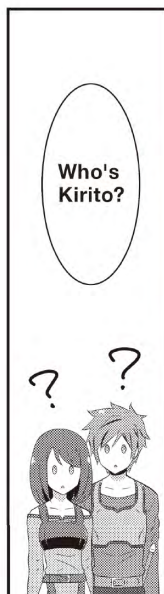
Well,  
lookie  
Here!

You two  
Seem  
close  
on the  
first day!

The  
name's  
Klein!



Combat  
training,  
huh?



Who's  
Kirito?

? ?



...Oh!

Maybe  
Kirito'll  
help out.



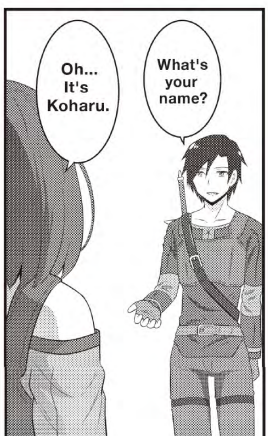
Ow  
ow ow!

NICE!



Oof...

You got  
zero clue  
how to  
move

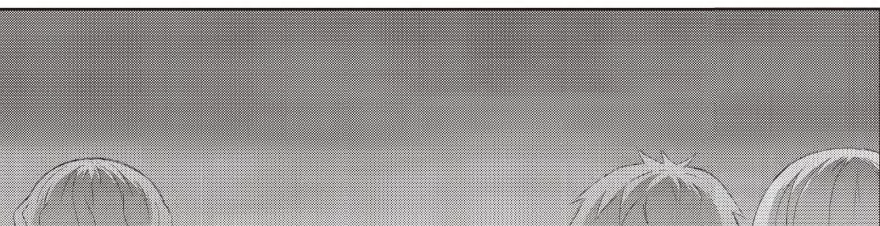


It's five already?  
Gonna grab a bite!  
Got some pizza waiting  
For me!

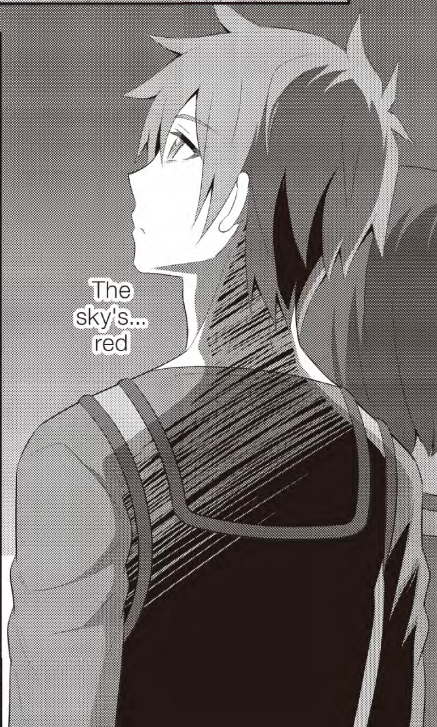




This looks like everyone in SAO...



Attention, players. I welcome you to my world.



The sky's... red

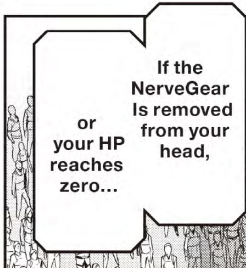


Kayaba?  
The guy  
who made  
SAO?



And  
as of  
this  
moment,  
I am in  
control of  
this world.

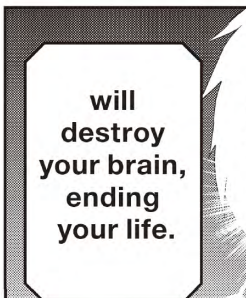
My  
name is  
Akihiko  
Kayaba.



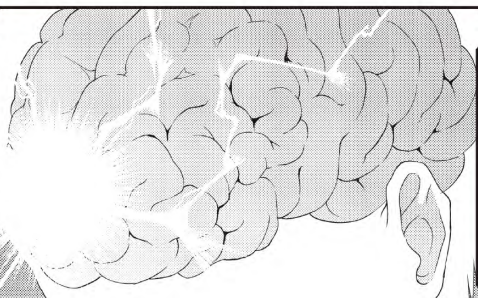
If the  
NerveGear  
is removed  
from your  
head,  
or  
your HP  
reaches  
zero...




I have designed it  
so you cannot  
log out or  
escape Aincrad  
until you  
beat the game.



will  
destroy  
your brain,  
ending  
your life.



A  
microwave  
transmitter  
in the  
NerveGear



As a result,  
213 players  
have been  
deleted from  
Aincrad  
and the  
Real world.

Despite  
my warning,  
some have  
tried  
removing  
the  
NerveGear.




including  
the  
deaths.

As you  
can see,  
Medias have  
round the  
coverage of  
Everything,

Breaking  
Deaths linked to  
popular game "SAO"

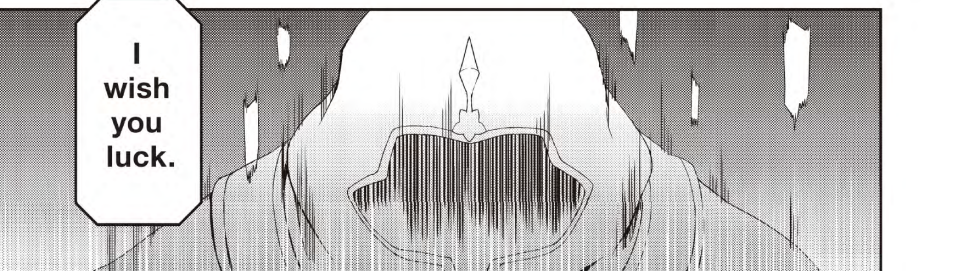
LIVE

No  
way...  
What  
the..!



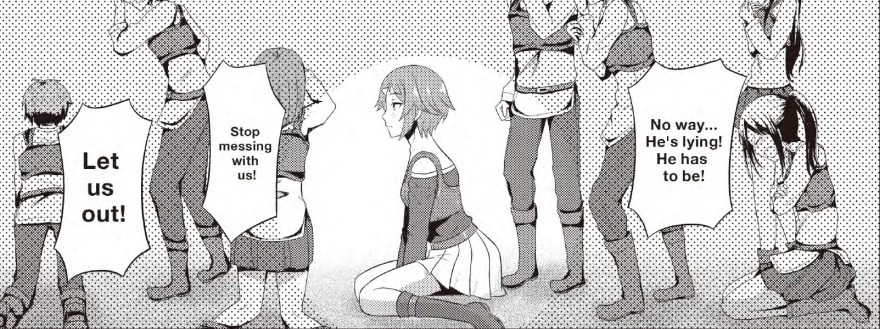
you  
must clear  
all 100 floors  
of the game.

There's  
only  
one way to  
escape now:



I  
wish  
you  
luck.











Plus,  
I don't  
mind!

You  
had  
every  
right  
to  
panic.

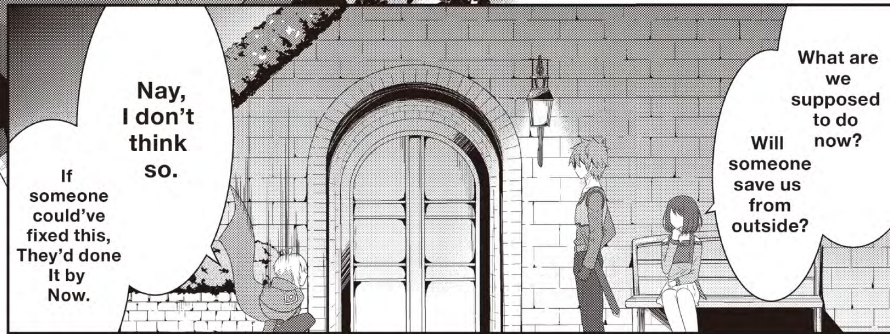
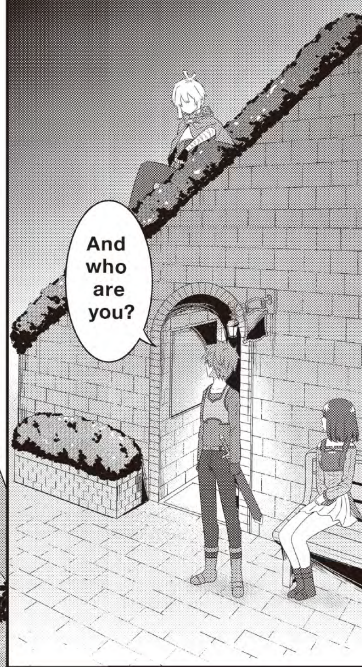
Sorry  
I  
freaked  
out...  
  
I  
should  
have  
kept  
calm



Thanks...



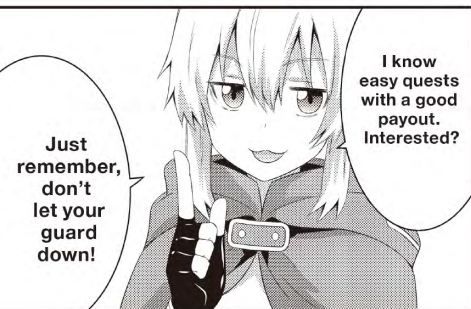
Aw,  
how  
touchin'!





I...  
won't  
hide.

So  
what  
do  
I  
do?



Just  
remember,  
don't  
let  
your  
guard  
down!

I know  
easy  
quests  
with  
a  
good  
payout.  
Interested?



Cash.

First,  
you're  
gonna  
need  
something!

You  
need  
to  
buy  
or  
buff  
your  
equipment!



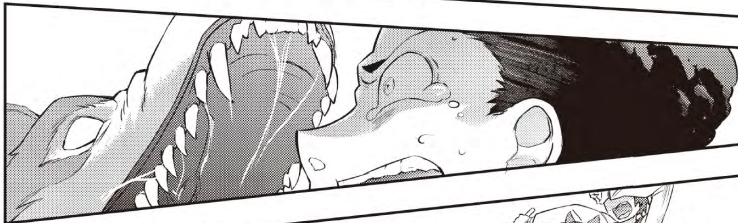
I'll  
need  
to  
be,  
to  
survive!

...I'm  
interested.



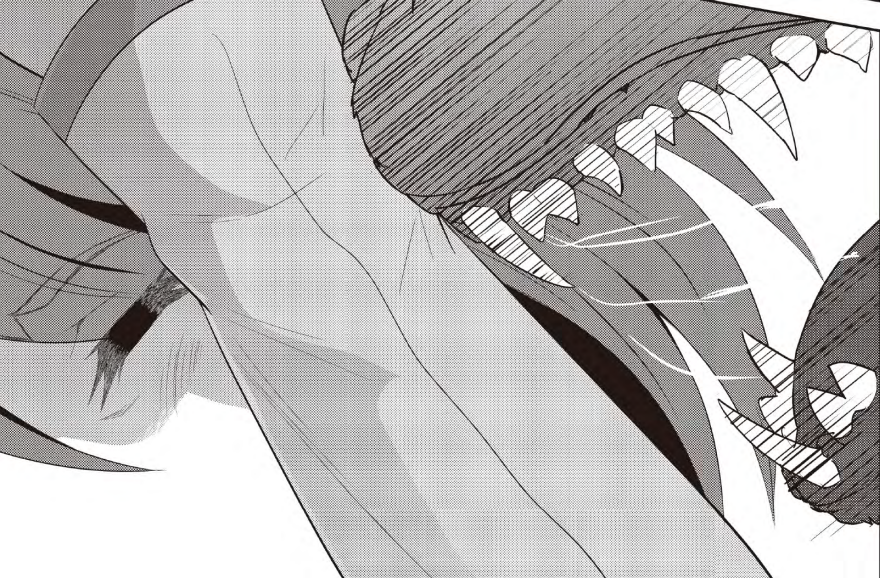
That's  
what  
I  
like  
to  
hear!

Great.



YÉAARGH!!









Did... those players...  
d-die... for real?

There wasn't any blood...  
There wasn't any blood...



I guess we have to assume so...



But That's not how someone should have to die..!

I know this is The world we have to live now...





Let's get stronger.  
Let's live,  
and beat  
this thing!



Besides...

You're the  
only one  
I can trust  
here...



No,  
You're not.  
You'll be  
way stronger  
in no time

But...  
I'm just  
slowing you  
down...



We'll get stronger... for me...



Really..?

Well, okay...  
Watch out!  
Cause I'll  
Be stronger  
Than you  
Someday!

He's  
always there

Together.



And slowly, we grew stronger.

Koharu  
And I  
fought  
side by side

clearing  
All sorts  
of quests.



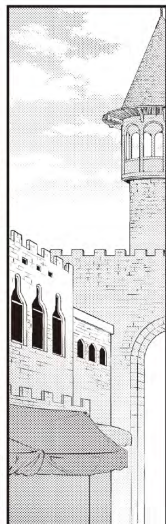
Why do we get Hungry in VR?!

What kind of system is this!!

Hehehe!



How about lunch?





Sorry for laughing.

I'm Sachi.



It's nice hearing about things besides monsters and quests.

I just couldn't help myself. You looked so happy.



I've heard all sorts of rumors about you, Koharu.

Do you have time to chat?



I'm in a guild with friends from high school.

They're somewhere around here...

I'm Koharu. Nice to meet you!  
Are you a solo player?

You're about our age, but you're Amazing!

It's so cool that you Fight on the frontlines!

Me? Why?

I bought enough for everyone, but they're not back yet, and it's about to expire.

Oh! You said you were hungry, right? Here, try this.

Ha ha... Er, thanks, I guess?

Sandwiches? Are you sure it's okay?

They're off earning money to buy me a spear, so I can fight far away from the monsters...

I'm just a big burden on all of them...

...Because I'm a coward. I'm terrified every time I leave town...

And... why aren't you with them?



Are you scared too, Koharu?



Don't push yourself. Take it slow.

It's only natural to be scared.



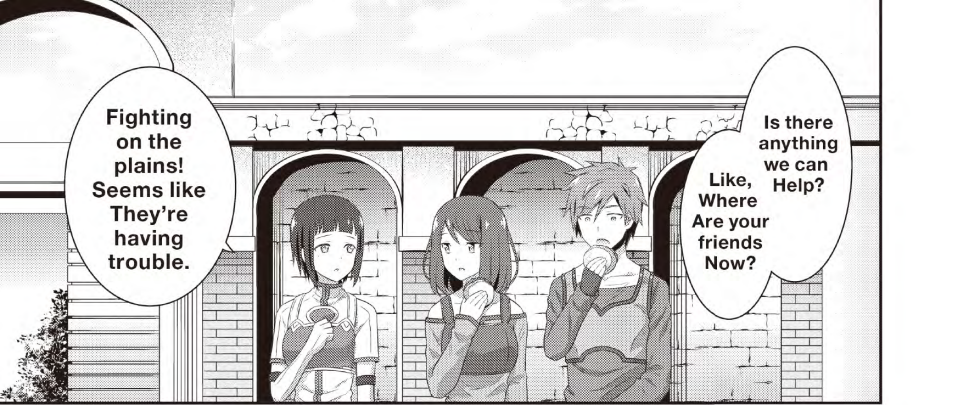
You bet I am. Terrified!

I can't handle it on my own... but I've got a friend.



...I see. I've got friends too, so maybe one day...

Well, thanks for the pep talk.

A black and white manga panel showing three characters standing in a room with arched doorways. On the left, a girl with short dark hair and a white shirt with a dark vest looks towards the center. In the middle, another girl with shoulder-length dark hair and a dark vest looks towards the right. On the right, a boy with spiky hair and a dark vest looks thoughtful, with his hand to his chin. The background shows a brick wall and a window with a view of a cloudy sky.

Fighting on the plains!  
Seems like They're having trouble.

Is there anything we can help?

Like, Where Are your friends Now?

A close-up black and white manga panel of the boy from the previous panel. He is shown from the chest up, holding a round sandwich with both hands and taking a bite. He has a thoughtful expression.

Mmm...

It's to thank her for the sandwiches!

A close-up black and white manga panel of the girl with shoulder-length hair from the previous panel. She has a surprised or questioning expression, with wide eyes and a slightly open mouth. A small star-shaped mark is visible on her forehead.

Right?

A black and white manga panel showing two girls. The girl with shoulder-length hair is in the foreground, looking towards the right. Behind her, the girl with short dark hair is also looking towards the right, with her hand to her chin. The background shows a window with a view of a cloudy sky.

We'll investigate for you!

Ahh!

It's much easier to fight a monster if you know its patterns, right?

Hey, I never agreed to that.

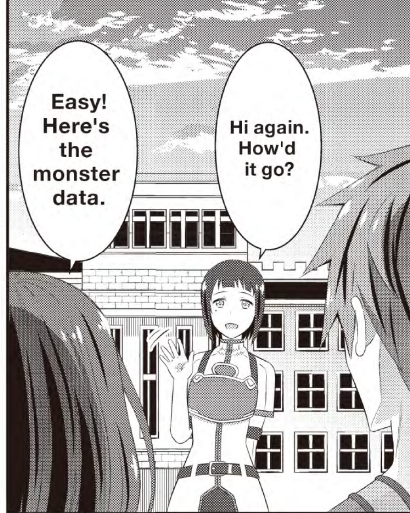
A wide black and white manga panel showing a vast landscape under a cloudy sky. The ground is a mix of light and dark patches, possibly representing a field or a plain. The sky is filled with soft, scattered clouds.

Five hours later



Thank you so much!

Wow! This is great. I'm sure everyone will jump for joy.



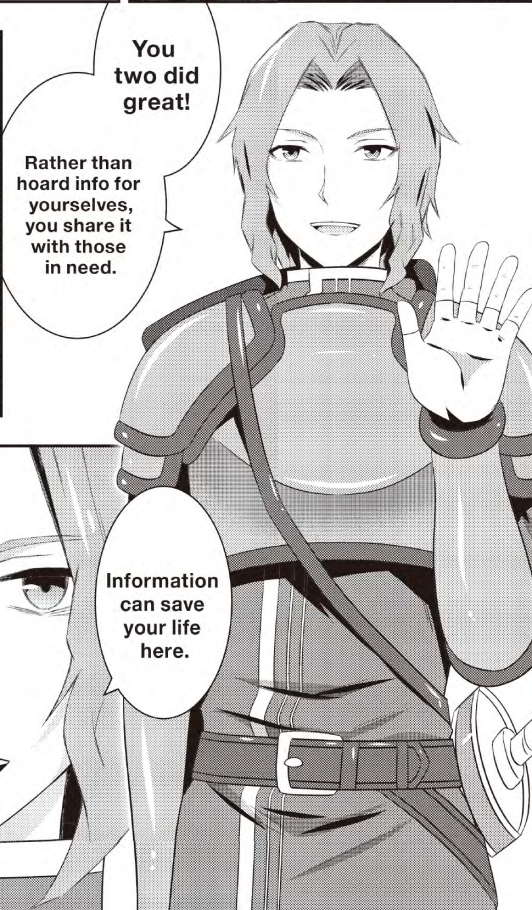
Easy! Here's the monster data.

Hi again. How'd it go?



Oh, sorry. I'm Diavel. Nice to meet you!

Who are you?



You two did great!

Rather than hoard info for yourselves, you share it with those in need.



Your willingness to share it is truly inspiring!

Information can save your life here.



If you wish to help us conquer this floor, come to Tolbana.





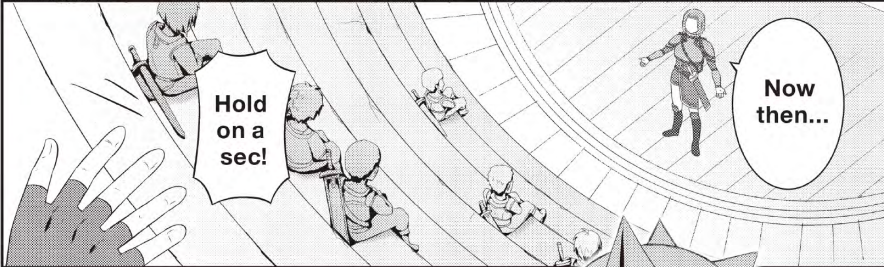


**Tolbana: Amphitheater**

Ha ha! Dude, there's no job system in this game!  
Ooh, knight! Cool! Lol!

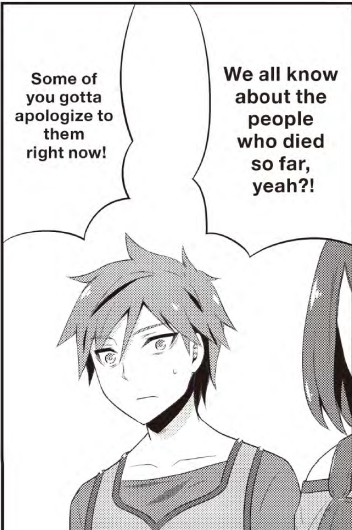
Thanks to everybody for coming!

I'm Diavel, and in this game, the job I rolled is knight!



Hold on a sec!

Now then...



Some of you gotta apologize to them right now!

We all know about the people who died so far, yeah?!



Before we take on the boss, I wanna get something off my chest.

My name's Kibaou, got that?

So, you want the Ex-beta testers to apologize

And give up their winnings, Right?



Hey— My name Is Agil. Can I Say Something?

They snagged the good guests and hunting spots! Ignoring us like we're nothing!

I'm talking to you ex-beta testers! They ditched us the day this game Started!



SAO Strategy IF BOSS

Yeah, so?

You got One of these Guide books Didn't You?

The item Store hands Them out For free.

Everyone had equal access to this info. Even so, lots Of players Still died.

Guh...

It was the ex-beta testers handing these out.



I didn't come here to point fingers at anyone.

I'm here to find out how we're gonna beat that boss.





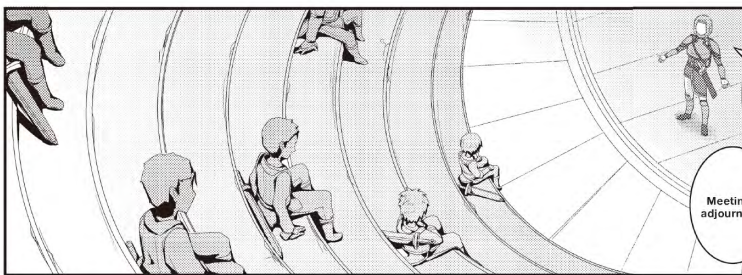
Hmph! Fine.  
I'll follow  
your lead.

So!  
Can we  
get back  
to the  
meeting  
now?

but  
let's work  
together to  
beat  
this floor!

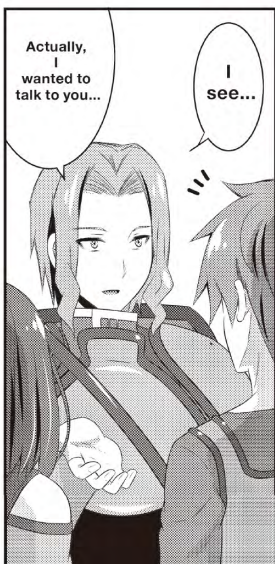
I'm sure  
you all have  
some  
reservations,

It's just like  
Agil said.  
We need to  
look to  
the future.



So,  
meet up  
at the  
fountain in  
Central  
Tolbana  
tomorrow!

Meeting  
adjourned!



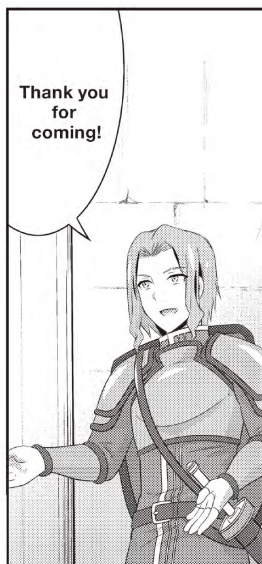
Actually,  
I  
wanted to  
talk to you...

I  
see...



I'm  
glad to  
have  
more  
allies.

We're  
still not  
sure  
we're  
joining  
the raid.



Thank you  
for  
coming!



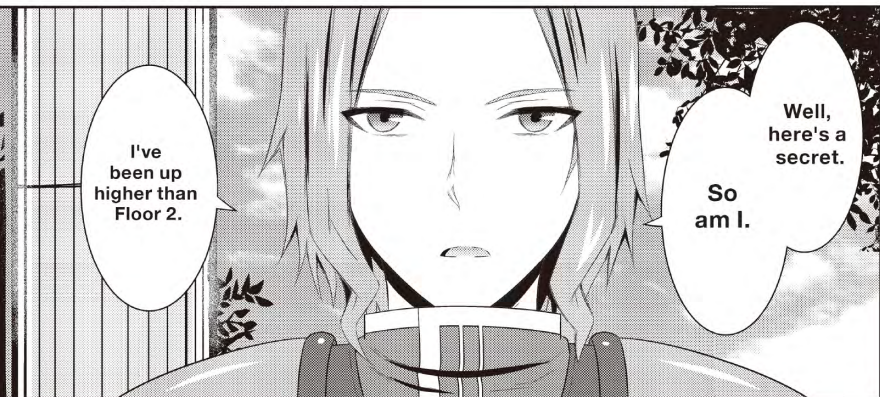
Yeah.  
I am.

...

You're  
an  
ex-beta  
tester,  
right?

I  
thought  
so.

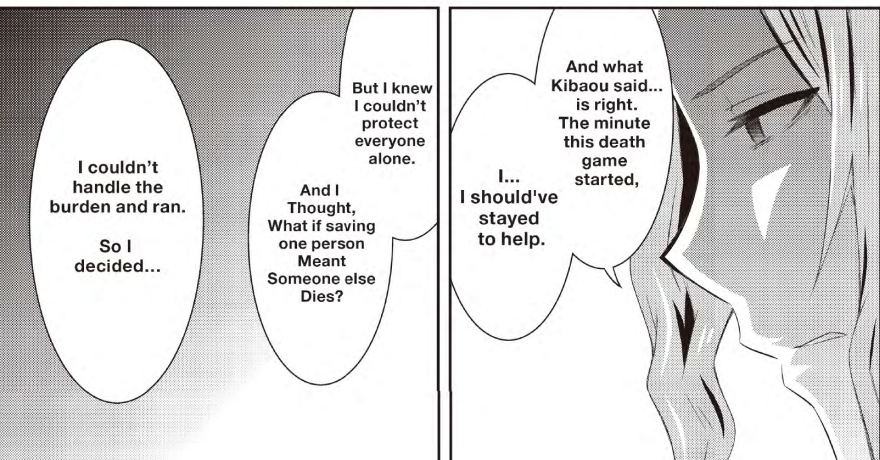
...So?  
What  
is it?



I've  
been up  
higher than  
Floor 2.

Well,  
here's a  
secret.

So  
am I.



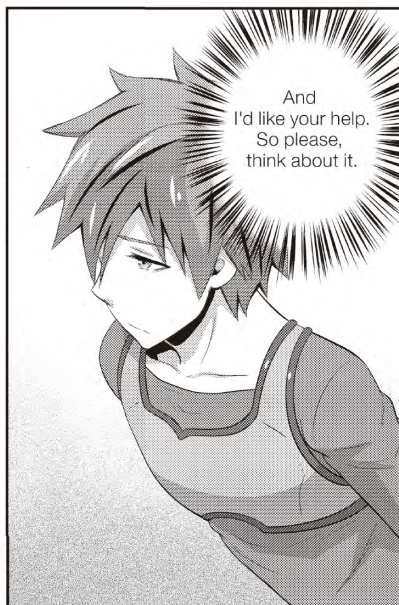
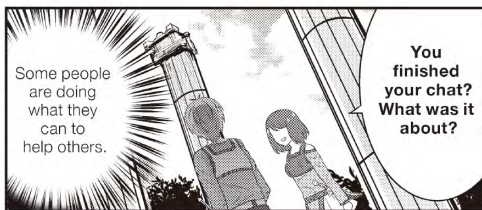
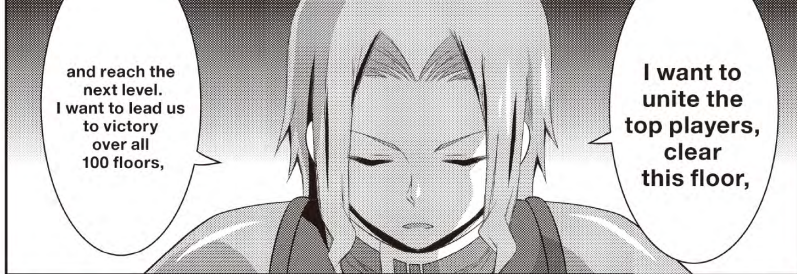
I couldn't  
handle the  
burden and ran.

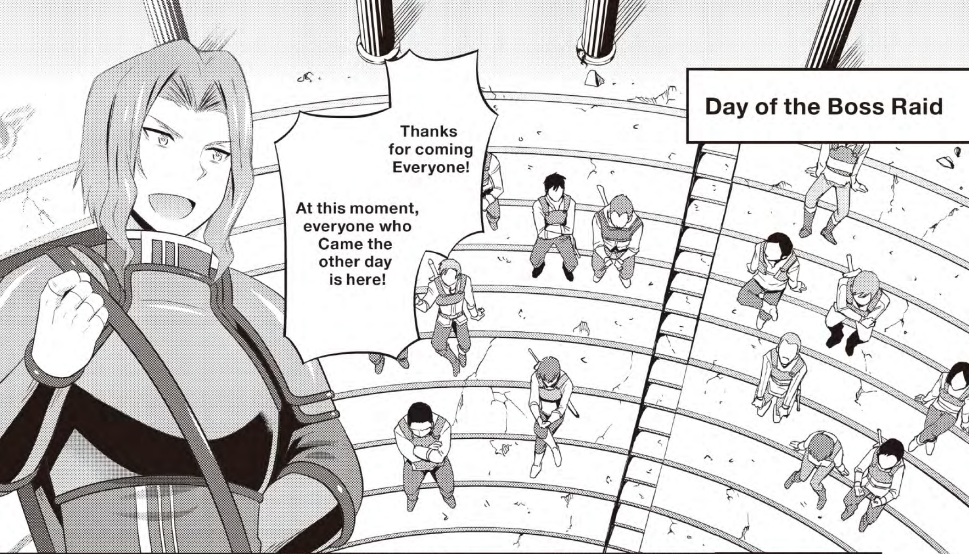
So I  
decided...

But I knew  
I couldn't  
protect  
everyone  
alone.

And I  
Thought,  
What if saving  
one person  
Meant  
Someone else  
Dies?

And what  
Kibaou said...  
is right.  
The minute  
this death  
game  
started,  
I...  
I should've  
stayed  
to help.





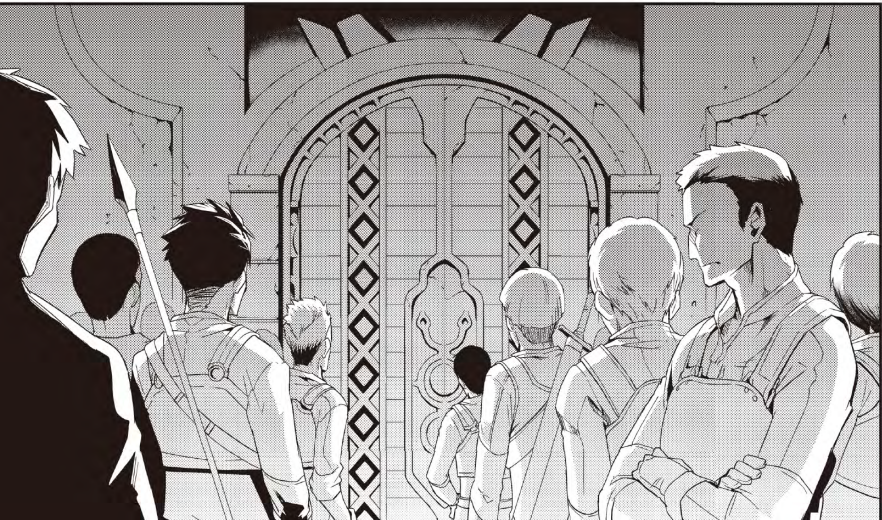
**Day of the Boss Raid**

Thanks  
for coming  
Everyone!

At this moment,  
everyone who  
came the  
other day  
is here!



Now...  
Let's  
win!!





And...  
I'd  
protect  
you.

But  
I promised  
Sachi.  
I'd fight,  
and I'd live.

Honestly...  
I'm  
scared.



I'll  
protect  
Koharu,  
no matter  
what!

Oh,  
not  
that  
again!

Just don't  
trip over  
your  
feet  
again.

Hey,  
that's  
my line.



Chaaarge!!

Let's  
do it!



Remember!  
It'll change  
from an  
axe to a talwar  
when its  
health  
is low!

Don't forget  
that its  
attack  
patterns  
change  
too!

Be careful  
and  
stay with  
your  
group!



Stand  
back!  
I've  
got it!

Its  
HP's  
low!  
Watch  
for  
the  
talwar!







Get  
outta  
there!

That's not a  
talwar...  
This isn't  
like the  
beta!



Diavel's  
stunned!  
It's  
going to  
kill him!!



No!!  
I won't  
make it  
in  
time!!

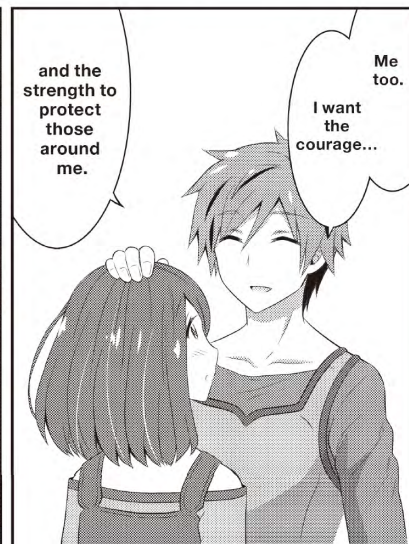


But...

I can!!

This way!

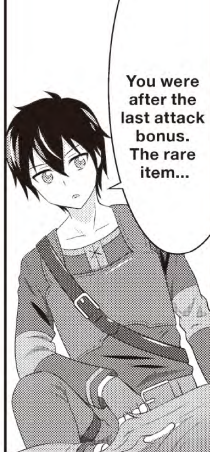
Formation's broken!  
Retreat!!





Please...  
Defeat the boss...  
For everyone  
here...

I still  
can't  
move...



You were  
after the  
last attack  
bonus.  
The rare  
item...



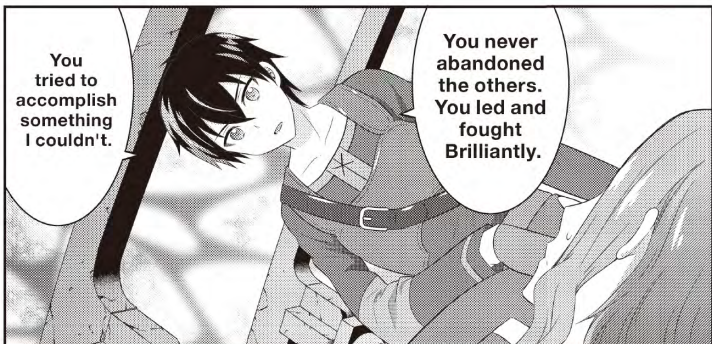
What  
were  
you  
thinking  
Diavel?!

You know.  
You were a  
beta tester too,  
weren't you?



So...

Leave  
the  
rest  
to me.



You  
tried to  
accomplish  
something  
I couldn't.

You never  
abandoned  
the others.  
You led and  
fought  
Brilliantly.



I'll go  
too.

Thanks.

Count  
me  
in.

You got it!

Asuna!  
We'll hit  
him  
just like  
the minions!

When  
I was  
first trapped  
in SAO...

I thought  
"I'll protect Koharu,  
no matter what!!"

But  
that was an  
excuse.  
I was just  
scared  
to be alone.

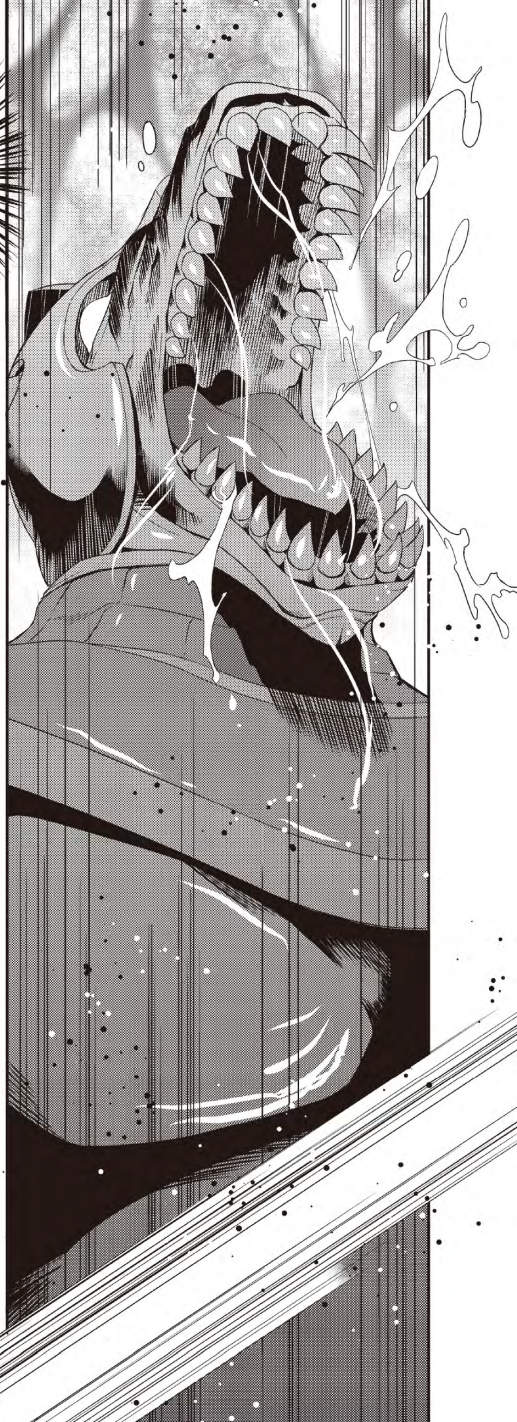
**Kirito!!  
Now!!**

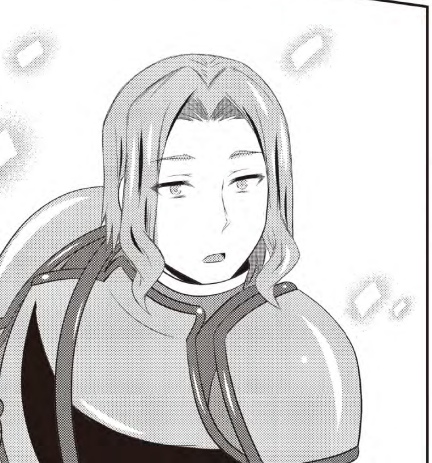
I was sure  
I wasn't  
brave  
enough to fight  
for others...

**But...**

**Got it!**

**Asuna!  
Last attack!  
With me!**







Is it...  
over?

If it's not  
too late  
to be brave!  
To be strong!  
Then maybe...!





It's not like that...

Diavel wouldn't have almost died if you told us about the boss!

You're an ex-beta tester aren't you?!

Why'd you lie to us?!



I'm nothing like those guys.

I made it higher than anyone during the Beta.

Even you guys are better than they were.



Most of them were rookies. They couldn't even level.

Beta tester? It's not cool to put me in the same class as amateurs.



He's a beta tester AND a cheater! He's a beater!

You're a goddamn cheater, that's what you are!

What the hell? If that's true, you're worse than a beta tester!



I know way more than anyone, even that dumb knight over there.

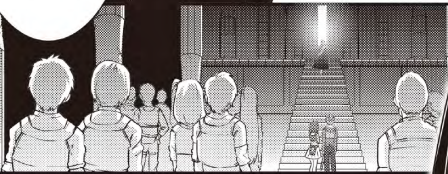
Kirito...



A  
"beater"?  
That's  
Good.  
I like  
It.

I'll  
Activate the  
floor 2  
gate.

Follow me,  
And expect  
to get  
Killed by  
The first  
monster  
you see

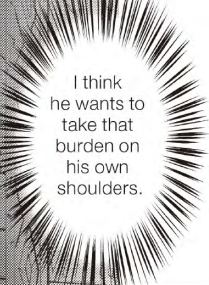


Well...

Why'd  
Kirito  
lie like  
that?  
Now  
everyone  
will  
hate  
him.



...Even though it might get him killed.



I think he wants to take that burden on his own shoulders.



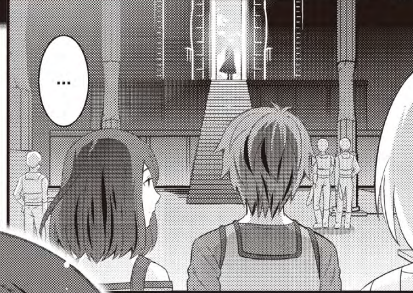
At this rate, all ex-beta testers would've been hated.



From here on, the monsters are only going to get stronger.

But...

Y-Yeah...



...



I'm not afraid.



But with you at my side...



And we'll survive SAO. Together.



Koharu and I will get stronger.

**What surprises await these two on the next floor?!  
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