

Vir-2-ual Craftality

By Davidfish and Slaykout

Lunar's Story through the Minecraft World

Summary

Lunar has been given a special seed number from Alex that gives him access to her world. He builds a special headset that allows him to enter the world and play with physical movement instead of a keyboard. He soon finds out that her world is full of other AI NPC's just like her, and that it is in danger of being deleted. He teams up once again with his friend Aidan and a bunch of old and new friends to stop whoever is behind the deletion of the special AI filled world.

Book Information

There are a total of 15 chapters in this story, again. So I should say that ideas in this book are not 100% original all the time again. I have taken ideas from other movies, stories or games or videos to create this story. So don't think I came up with this all by myself. Oh and I don't care about grammar or spelling again so if there's a mistake don't judge me for it. But I think it's less cringe than the first book. I use real life friend's names once again for thank you for letting me use them. And last but not least I had Sammi help me co write this book or come up with ideas so thank you to her.

Chapter I (Lunar's POV): Another Invention

Taking a break from work is pretty refreshing. After all, my latest project is almost complete. The strawberry froyo I made for myself almost tops the one from the store I get my froyo from. Being an engineer and all, I can just build myself a free froyo machine. Free froyo! I checked the coding behind my project once more before taking it for a test run. I turned it on and put the headset on my head. I entered a special seed number that Alex had given me before she returned back to her world. Finally, I entered the world. It was just a normal world so far, but I knew this was not just some single player world. Alex would be here. My latest technology allowed me to play in this world as if I was actually in it, with the safety of still being at home with the ability to disconnect, unlike my previous experience with my computer. The Minecraft world seemed super realistic. I could interact fully with the world and even though I could take damage, my physical body in the real world would not feel a thing. A new addition to the metaverse I wondered. I don't think I intend to make this one public or share it at all. The last time I tried making a device for good it almost ended the world. I got myself a basic set of Iron armor and other tools and food before I went to the coordinates that Alex sent me. I assumed it was where her base was located. I logged off for a bit to make more copies of my headset. I'm sure Aidan and some others will want to see this.

Chapter II (Lunar's POV): Last Day

The last day of school was today. I finally passed another year with a pretty good average. Aidan was walking next to me as we traveled to our lockers.

"So Aidan, you said you could come over today right?" I asked.

"Yeah I asked my parents so we are all good here," he said.

I was keeping the reason of why I asked him to come over as a surprise. He was gonna be shocked once he realized that we could still talk to Alex and the other people we met during our previous adventure. We were about to leave to go home until my favorite people paid us a visit.

"How's it going Lunar," said Finley.

Not this guy again. At least since then it seems like he changed to be a little bit better.

"Oh nothing much, I'm just gonna go home," I said.

"Hey at least tell me what you guys are up to," he replied.

"We are gonna do something very cool. Something cooler than kicking your ass when you were an enderman," I joked.

Grayson and Jayson laughed as they walked away from us.

"So why are our lockers right next to theirs again?" I asked.

"Those guys are still pretty annoying sometimes, well at least it's better than a couple of months ago," said Aidan.

I agree. We walked to an ice cream place to get some cookies and cream ice cream before heading over to my place. Which is the best ice cream flavor of course. Of course I can always just make a froyo whenever I want to, but I wanted to have something different for now. We finally arrived at my house after walking in the blaring heat.

“Is your basement gonna be clean this time?” asked Aidan.

“Oh yeah, it’ll be really clean,” I said.

I realized that having a cleaner workspace means that my work time will be more efficient. All it took was a custom vacuum I made. Maybe I could just make a robot maid to clean my house for me. My parents are too busy to be home sometimes.

“Anyways, what did you want me to come over for?” he asked.

“Well, before Alex returned to her world that day, she left me a piece of paper with a special seed number and coordinates. Which then I assumed that if we could enter this seed and travel to the coordinates that we could meet up with Alex in the Minecraft world. But we couldn’t just create the world and play on our computers normally. I needed to make a new invention so that we could actually be able to meet Alex,” I explained.

“So you want us to go in?” asked Aidan.

“Well, that’s the plan, I just hope my PC can take in having 2 headsets plugged into it,” I said.

Well it hasn't been tested in that regard yet but there’s a first time for everything.

Chapter III (Lunar’s POV): Entering the Virtual World

Aidan looked so surprised by my new invention. It was yet another headset, however, it was much more safe then the Super Merge I made a long time ago. Plus, you can decorate the headsets to your personal liking however you want.

“So how do I work this thing?” asked Aidan.

“Just put it on and then sit still. I can set up the rest from my PC,” I said.

He followed my instructions and then sat down on one of my bean chairs. Bean chairs are the best. I think that’s what they are called at least. Comfy either way at least. I turned on the PC and headsets again and sat down on a bean chair myself. In a few minutes me and Aidan would be in the Minecraft world Alex is in.

We entered the world shortly after. Like the real world, I could not see or hear Aidan despite the fact that we were in the same room in real life. I had to travel back to spawn to meet up with him. I left myself a trail when I first entered so that I could go back to spawn whenever I wanted to. I made sure to kill any livestock that I passed by so that Aidan could have enough food to eat in game. On my way back to spawn, I almost fell inside a massive ravine that generated. I forgot that Minecraft updated to 1.18 and introduced massive caves and new mobs and a bunch of other stuff. Thank god it wasn’t when the Minecraft world was spat out into the real world. Some of the stuff in this update would’ve been extremely lethal if it were to be in this world. I finally got back to spawn where I saw Aidan trying to kill a pig. I don’t think he adjusted to his movement yet.

“There you finally are Lunar,” he said, “Now can you tell me how this whole thing works?”

I began to explain, “Well just use your physical body to feel and move in this world. Like try swinging your hand in real life and it’ll be the equivalent to hitting something in this game.”

He started to get better at killing the pig and eventually killed it. At least he wasn't a total noob at this game, but I suppose playing it this way was harder than a mouse and keyboard. He collected the raw pork chops from the pig he killed and went off to cut some trees.

"Ok Aidan, once you are done with that tree, let's get a move on to Alex's coords," I said.

He agreed and hurried up with the tree he was cutting down. I turned on my coordinates and we started heading over. There was a large village on our way to the coords. We decided to talk to the villagers and see what they had in stock. Surprisingly, the villagers were able to talk to us and not just trade. It seemed like this world was full of AI. I have to ask Alex about that later. We thanked the villagers for the food they offered us and continued on our journey. It was going to be a long one.

Chapter IV (Lunar's POV): Rough Terrain

I don't know why Alex has to live so far away. The coords were over 5,000 blocks from spawn. Maybe she was just trying to escape something or someone. We crossed by multiple biomes on our trip there. At some point we had to craft a boat to continue our journey. Aidan saw and pointed out a sea temple in the distance at one point in the sea trip. I told him that we should just ignore it for now and maybe come back later. We were nowhere near ready to be taking on a sea temple, even if this one wasn't being controlled by a merged Jayson. There were multiple coral reefs along the way as well but we didn't have silk touch pickaxes to break any coral blocks at all.

"Yo, I think I see the shore up ahead," said Aidan.

He was right, we were approaching the shore and it was an ice spikes biome. Luckily there were no hostile mobs that spawn naturally in this biome. We saw some polar bears and tried to feed them some fish. They took the fish. That was strange, polar bears in this game normally don't take any food. There has to be something going on with this particular Minecraft world.

"Uh Aidan look away for a second," I told Aidan.

We both turned around to let the polar bears do their thing. Birth is quite a wonderful thing huh. I made sure to collect some ice blocks in case Alex needed them.

After passing the ice spikes biome, we encountered a neat mountain biome. This must have been the generation of the new 1.18 update. The mountain was too large to go around so we decided to climb to the top and do some MLG water bucket plays. There was a lot of snow at the top. We were walking just fine until I heard Aidan cry out for help. I wonder what it was this time.

"Lunar help!!!" cried Aidan.

"What is going on!?!?" I asked.

I turned around and saw Aidan slowly sinking into some snow. It was this stupid powder snow they added to the game. Aidan was going to freeze to death if I didn't do anything. I grabbed a water bucket and quickly watered out the snow beneath him.

"Thanks, I forgot that type of snow was added to the game," he said.

“Well don’t worry now, we are at the top now,” I said.

We looked out and saw a river at the very bottom. We were approaching the coords Alex sent us. I told Aidan that we were gonna have to jump into the river. I went first and landed safely. Even in the virtual world I felt such a nice breeze and splash. Aidan was next. I saw him falling down but it looked like he was not going to make it into the river. I closed my eyes as he got closer. A few minutes later, he swam right next to me.

“Aidan? Did you make it in the river?” I asked.

“Nah, I decided to land on this haybale that we got from the village, only taking 2 hearts of damage,” he said.

Aidan was really out here doing some Dream plays on our adventure. We got out of the river and found some horses. The villagers gave us some saddles so we decided to tame some and ride the rest of the way to the coords. We got lucky that our horses were able to jump a good amount of blocks and run at a pretty fast speed. As we were closing in the coords, I saw that Alex’s base must be in the jungle we were approaching. The coords were directly inside the jungle. We left our horses in a stable and went into the jungle. It seemed more creepy playing inside the world instead of just a keyboard and mouse. The vines and animal sounds almost sounded as if we were inside a real jungle in real life. Close to the coords we saw a jungle temple. Aidan and I didn’t see any problem exploring it so we decided to go inside it. I held out a torch to create some light. Aidan followed behind me safely. I made sure to break the redstone that was going to activate any traps. The chest had a diamond so that was pretty lucky. Aidan had a hard time trying to figure out how to open the door with the code but I just broke into it and looted the chest. There was a golden apple and a few sticks. I gave the sticks to Aidan and held onto the golden apple.

We left the temple to finish the trip to the coords Alex sent us. Aidan saw some parrots along the way. We decided to break some melons and try to tame them. I was able to tame a light blue parrot and Aidan got himself the green one. We were having too much fun with the parrots that we didn’t realize that night was coming. We saw multiple mobs coming towards us that we had to fight. At least they were easier than sport zombies or electro spiders. Our armor and tools were going to break soon so we decided to run for it. After a couple minutes, we arrived at the coords that Alex sent us, but we didn’t see any building.

“Where the heck is Alex?” asked Aidan.

We decided to look around for a while, until the floor beneath us opened up with pistons. We fell inside and the floor closed back up. We fell for a while before landing inside some cage. I heard some footsteps coming towards us.

“Thank god it wasn’t them,” said a voice I recognized, “Took you long enough to get here,”

I turned around, it was Alex. Boy was I glad to see her.

Chapter V (Lunar’s POV): We need backup

“Yeah well that was a pleasant entrance we got just now,” said Aidan.

“Sorry guys lol, this is pretty much the way I have to live everyday,” said Alex.

I was going to ask Alex what she meant by that but decided to wait until we got out of this cage. Alex broke open the obsidian walls and let us out. The room wasn't anything too special. It was probably just for getting in and out of her base. She led us down a long tunnel until we reached the main lobby of her base. It looked giant, she built this inside a huge ravine. There were walls of chests and plenty of farms around. It looked like Alex didn't even need to leave her base in order to survive. She had an enchanting room, potion room and basically any room any Minecraft Player would want in a base, plus the looks and design were majestic and effective.

"I wish I could build a base as nice as you Alex," I said.

She laughed, "Don't worry Lunar, you'll be able to one day."

"So Alex, what's new in your world?" I asked.

She looked down for a second, I could tell that she had a worrisome look on her face.

"Is everything ok?" asked Aidan.

"It's... complicated, I'll give a little insight on why I have to live down here, and there is something you should know about this world and the seed with it," said Alex.

The 3 of us went to a chill room in her base. We all took a seat with some food and Alex started to explain.

"See, the thing is, I'm not the only one with AI. You probably noticed by now but this whole world doesn't function like normal Minecraft. This seed must've been tampered with at one point and no normal player can get access to it. Only you guys since I gave you the seed,"

I mean, that does make sense. We could talk to villagers and feed polar bears.

She continued, "Like even you guys, your avatars have actual expressions and movements that players can't normally do. It's like you guys took your real life bodies into the game,"

"Oh, yeah that's because I made a machine that could allow us to enter the virtual world. Trying to join a Minecraft world with that seed normally wouldn't work, so I thought this invention of mine would help," I said.

"It does seem like it's helping. Anyways, Lunar, there's been something going on. This whole world is full of friendly AI NPC's and animals. But, there's been someone or something that is trying to delete our world. I suspect it's something the developers sent to correct the AI here and make this seed into a normal one. Strange things have been going on. Stranger than Stranger Things,"

I didn't know Alex knew about that Netflix show.

"Look at this, I took screenshots," she handed us a book with some images inside.

Aidan and I took a look, it was a whole town built by people turned completely into dirt. In the corner of a screenshot, I saw a shadow of a player. Could this be the culprit we are after?

"Alex, we are the only real life players in this world right?" I asked.

She nodded, "But, there are other NPCs just like me in this world, but I don't know if any of them are behind the slow destruction of this world," she added on, "I have to tell you something right now, if any NPCs in this world die, they won't respawn, and that includes me. That's why I live in this underground base,"

Wow, I didn't know that Alex would not be able to respawn at all. She's basically playing in hardcore mode now that I think about it.

"Alex, you mentioned "them" when we fell down, who are you talking about?" asked Aidan.

"Right, those guys. There are bots in this world as well. They have the same shape as an NPC but they only have one job, and that is killing other NPCs. They appeared at the same time the slow destruction of the world started. I think they are being controlled by the thing that is behind all of this," said Alex.

"They aren't super hard to kill, but there are a lot of them. I saw thousands of them at one point living in this world," she added.

That didn't sound like a good thing.

"In any case, I'm glad you came. I wanted to ask if you would be willing to help me take down whatever is destroying this world, otherwise, I'm a goner," she said.

I looked at Aidan and we both knew that we were willing to help. It is summer break, after all.

"Yeah we are more than down to save this world as well. Can't lose you after all," I said.

"Thanks guys. I know we are all pretty tough but, I think we will need some backup. Do you have any friends you can ask to join the world?" asked Alex.

I had 2 people in mind that could help us out. One of them helped save the real life world with us. The other one is a fellow engineer I met in my tech class during school. I really hope they will be willing to join us. The headsets take a lot of time to make. I didn't even have a name for it yet. I'll think of it later.

"I got 2 people I can ask, for now we'll set our spawn points here and be back tomorrow, it's almost dinner time in our world," I said.

"Alright, see you guys," said Alex.

Aidan and I disconnected and returned to the real world. He said goodbye and went home. I made myself some food before going to bed. Tomorrow I would have to find them to see if they would join us for yet another adventure.

Chapter VI (Lunar's POV): Recruitment Time

I have no clue why Katrina was at the park on a rainy day. It was the most uncomfortable weather to be taking a walk in.

"Why the heck do we have to meet her in this weather?!" asked Aidan.

"I don't know, she didn't want to meet us anywhere else," I said.

We took a smooth trail and passed by some ducks. They were looking angry and started chasing us for some reason. Aidan and I ran for it and hid behind some bushes until they left us. Why was mother nature against us today? Aidan was walking directly beside me underneath my umbrella. I told him that he should've brought one but decided to ignore my advice. We were moving pretty slowly because of that. About 20 minutes later we finally found her sitting on a bench under a rooftop. She was drinking a smoothie.

"Did we really have to meet out here!?" I asked.

“Well, I figured you could help me out quickly before I help you out,” she said.

“Alright, what’s the deal?” asked Aidan.

“Well I was just taking a walk the other day, and when I got home I realized that I lost my bag out here,” she said, “So after we find it we can go save your world thingy or whatever you said,”

Well what else could we do. We needed all the people we could get, and quite frankly I knew like 6 people at my school. We split up and started looking for Katrina’s bag. It was a medium pink bag so it shouldn’t be that hard to find. I went deeper into the trail and saw traces of pink string on the ground. Maybe this was it. I continued to follow it until it just suddenly ended. What was this place anyways? I’ve never seen this area in town before. Probably because I don’t get out much. I was about to turn back when I heard a rustling noise in some bushes close to me. I walked towards it and there was a raccoon inside. I looked closer and saw that it had taken Katrina’s bag for itself. I was going to have to snatch it back somehow. First, I tried to trade with it by giving it some food. It rejected it. I realized I was going to have to pull out the big guns. No, I don’t mean violence. I would never resort to violence. I pulled out a device I made. Nothing too special, it was just an extendable claw with 100% accuracy. I activated it and went for the bag, but the raccoon just kept running around.

“Sit still you little bitch,” I said.

Pardon my language, but this raccoon was being annoying. I finally managed to get the bag back and ran back all the way to our original meeting spot. The rain finally stopped.

“So, did you get it?” asked Katrina.

“Yep, here it is,” I handed her the bag.

“Thanks, there were some real valuables inside, but why is it so dirty?”

“Uh, long story but a raccoon got a hold of it,”

“Oh whatever, I’ll clean it later. So are we gonna go do your game thing now?”

“Yeah, but first we need to go find another friend of mine, hopefully she is willing to join us as well,” I said.

Her name is Sammi, and she is another engineer friend I met during my tech class at school. Her devices aren’t as complex as mine but are still very good. I called her to ask where she was.

“Yo, where are you at,” I said.

“Is this urgent, I am currently trying to fix my laptop,” she said.

“You only have a laptop? I thought you were an engineer,”

“I don’t have time to make a new one, and I lack funding,”

“Ok well tell you what, if you help us out, I’ll make you a new computer, sound good?”

“Hm, that’s a good deal but I still need to do something before we go, if you help me out it’ll be much quicker,”

“Alright, where are we heading,” I asked.

She told us to meet her at her house. We took a bus and got there. She greeted us outside.

“Hey guys. So there’s this problem I have behind my house, come look,” we followed her.

There were train tracks not too far from her house. There was also a broken down train sitting on the tracks, but it would make a loud sound out of it every once in a while.

"This thing is broken down, yet it keeps making loud ass sounds every once in a while. We need to get rid of it," she said.

"Are you kidding me, this thing weighs like 10,000 tons," said Aidan.

"I have a plan, I just need more people to execute it, come downstairs,"

We followed her to her basement and she showed us something she made. There was a mini train cart equipped with a huge cannon. It looked like it needed at least 4 people to run.

"I designed a train cart with this cannon so it can go on the tracks and maybe destroy the broken down train. However, I need ammo designed and developed and some people to actually use it after," she explained.

"Don't worry, I can quickly design some ammo," I said.

I looked around her workshop and got some iron, explosive materials and steel. It took a few hours. The others just sat and watched some Netflix. Finally I was ready.

I called Sammi over, "Take a look at this. An explosive bomb designed for your cannon. Also, the bomb is equipped with spikes. Once it lands on the surface it's pretty much going to stick to it. Alternatively, It can roll for a bit before detonating,"

"Wow, it looks amazing, how many did you make?" she asked.

"Well with the stuff here I was only able to make 3, so we'll have to hope it's enough to take down the train,"

The 4 of us headed to the tracks. Sammi got behind the cannon. Aidan pushed the cart closer to the train. Katrina loaded in the bomb I designed.

"Alright, we have 3 shots at this so let's make them count," said Sammi.

After the 3 of us backed away, I gave her the all clear. The first spike bomb went out and landed in the center, it blew up and more than 50% of the train was gone. She fired the other 2 and in seconds the train was completely gone. She got off the cart.

"Well, that should take care of the sound, thank you so much Lunar and friends," she said.

"No problem. It's getting late so you guys can just come over to my house tomorrow. Alex should be ok if we wait another day," I said.

We all split up and went back home. I still needed to make the headsets for Katrina and Sammi. They weren't super easy to make but once I made Aidan's I got used to it. I also decided to decorate them after with colors and what not. I really needed to think of a name for it. Maybe I'll think about it later. I also had to make what Sammi wanted by agreeing to help us.

Chapter VII (Lunar's POV): Bot Destruction

We all met up at my house early in the morning. I explained to Katrina and Sammi what was happening in Alex's world and what we needed to do. We all entered the basement and I handed them the headsets.

"Alright guys, we got to take care of this problem," I said.

I gave them it so that they could decorate them to their liking. After they finally put them on, I turned on the PC and we finally all entered the world. Aidan and I logged back on to meet Alex in her base.

“Hey Lunar, have you gotten your buddies yet?” asked Alex.

“OH wait. They must be all the way at spawn!” I said.

“Well not to worry, while you guys were gone, I built a highway to hell over to my base,”

“Are you sure they are gonna see the highway?” asked Aidan.

“Yeah, I put a lot of signs and directions, in fact they should be here any moment now,”

We waited for about 10 minutes until Katrina and Sammi arrived at Alex’s mega base.

“Alex, that highway was dangerous as hell! Why were there spots for ghastrs to shoot at us!?!?” asked Katrina.

“Rightttt, the highway isn’t fully protected. I didn’t have time. Sorry!”

“Oh whatever, it’s fine, good to see you again Alex,”

“Same here, and who is this Lunar?” asked Alex.

“It’s my friend Sammi, she’s a fellow engineer in my class, despite having the worst laptop I have ever seen in my life,” I said.

“Ok well now that we are all here, we got to find what is slowly deleting this world,” said Alex.

We gathered around a table. Alex put out some more screenshots that she took. The completely dirt town was filled with the crazy bots that Alex was talking about.

“I saved the coordinates to this town. I think it’ll lead us to whoever is behind this entire scheme. We need to get over there and deal with those bots,” said Alex, “But first, all of you guys need to get some actual gear,”

She told us to follow her into a deep underground room in her base. She opened a piston door and revealed a bunch of chests. Inside there were sets of fully enchanted netherite armor and tools, along with food totems and other fighting items.

“Alex! How the heck did you get all of this spare stuff?!” I asked.

“Well not much to do when you live in the Minecraft world 24/7. I figured it would come in handy one day,” she said.

Each of us grabbed a set and loaded up. Alex even made us a personal shulker box with colors.

“Alright, now let’s move!” she said.

She led us to the exit of the base. We reached the surface once again.

“Remember, if you see any bots, kill them,”

That was cold. The coordinates to the mysterious dirt village Alex sent were not too far away from our current location, only about 2000 blocks. We finally began the official journey. We saw a few bots every now and then, but with the 5 of us in fully maxed armor, they definitely did not stand a chance. We traveled across multiple different biomes. I got to see how this world was different from others. There were animals that actually had personalities instead of just wandering around the world. It was like something from a Minecraft animation. There was a pillager outpost that we passed by. A raid captain spawned and I killed it. Now I had this bad omen effect on me. Hopefully we won’t enter any villages

soon. Soon we approached the dirt village Alex saw. She was not wrong. Every single block in this village was just turned to dirt.

“Jesus, what the hell happened here?” asked Aidan.

“That’s what I’m asking too. This village was normal before but then one day, it just turned to dirt. All the villagers vanished as well,” said Alex.

We slowly started to walk towards the village. Nothing at all seemed to remain. All the job blocks and crops were gone. Anything that was a block was just dirt.

“This place looks awful. Much like my laptop,” said Sammi.

We continued to walk around the town, looking to see if there were any clues to who was behind all this. Suddenly, we all heard loud digging noises at the center of the town. We all ran to it and saw a huge hole. There were tons of bots digging out the town with max shovels. Whoever was behind this was deleting the world by digging out every block. They probably changed the village to dirt to break it down faster. We had to stop them, but if we jumped down into the hole we had no way to get out. It was being dug all the way to bedrock level, and this new update made the bottom of the world twice as deep. Before we could do anything, we were confronted by more bots on the surface. I tried to look around for my friends, but all of them were gone. Where did they go? I couldn’t think about it now. I destroyed all of the bots and heard a familiar voice.

“You fought hard, but maybe it was for nothing,” it said.

The person talking had an invisibility potion on them. I could see the particle effects.

“Yeah and who are you?” I asked.

“Well that doesn’t really matter right now. What does matter is that I was the leader of this village, and that your presence is the reason why my town has been turned into dirt,”

“Wait. That’s impossible, I only recently joined this world,” I said.

“And you are a new unknown that has entered this AI world, no player has ever been to before,” he continued, “Specifically, you yourself must go,”

“That makes no sense, there’s no way I caused this all to happen,”

“Well it’s up to you, you can choose to die now and restore the town, or let it be dug out,”

I refuse to believe this guy was telling the truth. Could I really believe that he was the leader of this village? It had no villagers in it. I didn’t see my friends either. Did he tell them the same thing? Maybe they were already awake in the real world. What was the worst that could happen? I can always just respawn right after. I looked down into the deep hole and took off my armor. I looked back at the mysterious villager before jumping down.

I saw the ground approach when a slime block was suddenly placed beneath me. I landed on it and bounced all the way back out of the hole. The mysterious person drank milk and revealed himself. I couldn’t believe it. It was the Chief from the village we saved from a raid in the real world.

“Are you kidding me? Is it really you?” I asked.

“Yes, this is the current state of the village now,” he said.

“Well what happened, and why did you almost kill me?”

“I know you’ve done some great things for the village, but I needed to see if you were truly worthy. And by nearly sacrificing yourself based on what I told you, I think you have what it takes,”

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“Well Alex probably told you about something that is deteriorating our world. I have something that can stop it, but I haven’t been able to find anyone who can use it, until now at least,” he said, “Come, I’ll show you where we took your friends,”

I followed him into a secret tunnel not too far from the village. It sucked seeing the only modern village in Minecraft be turned into pure dirt blocks. Whatever was behind all this needed to be stopped before the world was deleted.

Chapter VIII (Lunar’s POV): Tough Guys

We finally made it into a medium sized room where everyone was hiding. Norman was there too.

“Lunar! You finally made it,” said Sammi.

“So uh what have you guys been doing all this time?” I asked.

“Just chilling really, the villagers offered us to stay here,” said Katrina.

Alex came up to me to tell me some stuff she learned.

“Lunar, the village here was the same one we encountered in your world,” she said.

“I know, the Chief here told me, I-,” I was cut off.

“Please Lunar, just call me Max. Well now that everyone is here. I can finally show you the plan Norman and I have to stop whoever or what is behind all of this,” Norman pulled out a minecraft map, but it looked different. There was tracking technology on it and it could expand to show more land.

“We were able to make a device that can lead you right to the cause of this whole mess,” Max said.

“Wait, so why did you need to see if I was worthy to use a simple tracking device?” I asked.

Max looked down for a second, “A while ago, we sent out some villagers with the device to try to find who is behind all this. They haven’t returned since...”

He said that so sadly. It must be tough losing a couple of your own villagers.

“So, I needed to see if you had the potential to use it and defeat what is on the other side, it seems like you do, but I don’t think that the 5 of you will be able to do this, I would send more of my villagers, but as you know, if we die we don’t respawn, but you guys can,”

“Yeah I know what you mean, I think we can get some more backup,” I said.

“Perfect, once you guys get, let’s say 2 more people, return here and then I’ll give you supplies,” said Max.

The 5 of us left the room and said bye to Alex before returning to the real world. We all woke up back in my house.

“Alright guys, do we possibly know anyone else that can help us?” I asked.

“Well I don’t personally know anyone, but I think I can go home and make something that will help us defeat whoever is behind this,” said Sammi.

She left as the three of us tried thinking of who could join us. I suddenly got an idea. It wasn’t a great idea, but it was still an idea. I told Aidan and Katrina to meet at the park the next day.

“So why are we asking him again?” asked Katrina.

“Well look, this is probably the only guy I know, I don’t have many friends,” I said.

Well I didn’t like Finley much either, but he seems capable of going on this journey with us. Mainly also because I don’t have contact with anyone else. We headed to the skate area of the park where he normally does his tricks and whatnot. We arrived, but no one was there. That’s strange, he’s normally here at this hour. I told Katrina and Aidan to go look elsewhere while I waited here. Nothing much happens in this park if I’m being completely honest. Just perfect weather and animals here and there. I was about to go join the others when I heard his voice behind me.

“People don’t normally come looking for me. What do you need?” he asked.

“Look, I know you might be busy and stuff but I really need you to join me and some others to help Alex,” I said.

“Block girl?” he laughed, “And why would I want to go into your block world again? I almost died last time I was involved with this mobs,”

“I think we could use someone of your strength. We’ve had our differences for sure, but I swear it’ll be worth it,”

He thought about it for a moment, “Tell you what, do a trick that’ll impress me and I’ll tag along, assuming I get food and stuff,”

I’ve never done skateboarding before so I was a bit screwed. They don’t call me the engineer for nothing though. I pulled out my portable toolkit and grabbed some spare materials around the area. I typed in some code into a program and plugged it into my creation. Perfect. A skateboard that’ll move for me. And most importantly, safety is ensured while riding. I got onto the first tall ramp as Finley watched. I went down and went back up the other side like 20 meters in the air. As nervous as I was, I knew I was safe. The board did some flips before coming back down. So maybe I needed to cheat a little bit. Whatever works to getting someone to join the party. After maybe four minutes of constant tricking, I stopped the board.

“Well, I didn’t know you had that much skill in you. Good on ya,” he said.

“Thanks, now will you finally join us?”

“That was to show me you weren’t gonna waste my time by going. After this whole thing is over, you owe me something,”

Well whatever works I guess. I called Katrina and Aidan and Sammi to go back to my house. We finally got one person to join us. Max did say we needed two, but hopefully one of the others were able to get someone to join us.

Everyone came here about 2 hours later. Well everyone except Sammi. I think she was running late. Finley here was busy gobbling all my food.

“Lunar you cook really well though, maybe you should give up being an engineer and be a chef instead,”

Well if I wanted to be a chef I wouldn’t be investing all this time and money on equipment. We continued to wait upstairs until Sammi came. Aidan came up to me.

“Are you sure we can trust this guy? He almost kinda you know, destroyed our world last time,” he said.

“I think we can, what can he do as a normal guy anyways,”

“I guess, but just look at Katrina. They hate each other basically,”

Well he wasn't wrong about that. Katrina was still mad about what happened last time.

"When we get in the game, I swear I will beat your ass up," she said.

"With what, your wooden hoe?" he laughed.

She chased him across my house. Luckily there was room to keep those guys under control. What was taking Sammi so long? Before I could finish that thought, my doorbell finally rang. I raced to the door to answer it. It was Sammi, and someone else was with her too.

"Hey Sammi, who is your friend next to you?" I asked.

She didn't look much older than the rest of us, but probably out of high school already. Although I have no clue why she has a knife in her pocket. Hopefully she doesn't stab any of us.

"Oh, this is someone I met just last night while working on my project. This is Mack. She tried to kill me," she said.

"Is she here to join us? Also what do you mean she tried to kill you?!" I asked.

"Uhm, it's nothing to worry about now. She doesn't want to kill me anymore, right Mack?" said Sammi.

"Uh, no," said Mack, "definitely not. I heard you guys were going to stop some AI, who happens to be holding my dog hostage, so I'm coming."

"Well we technically needed one more person to join our party. Welcome to the team. You can stick with Sammi since you two know each other, even if you supposedly tried to kill her. And put the knife away somewhere please. We don't need people dying out here,"

"Oh, that sounds perfect!" she said excitedly.

It was just a Minecraft mission, it's not really too exciting. Who was she anyways? If Sammi trusts her then I guess I'll have to trust her as well. We all went to my basement as I went to quickly make 2 more headsets for Mack and Finley. I could sell these honestly if I wanted to. This type of technology is so powerful. I don't even know how I'm able to make it. I finally finished the headsets. I pulled Mack and Finley so I could explain what was going on.

"Alright, so kick some guy's ass, seems simple enough," he said.

"Well I already kill people for a living so this shouldn't be too hard," said Mack. Jeez. Why are these two so violent? I didn't think of it much. I calmed everyone down and told them to put on the headsets. I pressed the on button and made sure that the fans were turned on. We weren't coming back until Alex's world was saved.

Chapter IX (Lunar's POV): I'm the Friend That You Need

Wow. Back in the Minecraft world. For real this time. Alex came up to us.

"Finally you guys are back! Where are the 2 friends you asked to join?" asked Alex.

Oh shit. They would be at the spawn point. At this point, that would be over 20,000 blocks away. I didn't have to worry about that too much, it turned out.

"Don't worry Lunar, Norman created a device that can teleport any of your real life friends to our village," said Max.

He pressed a button and soon Finley and Mack came over.

"Wow Finley, your character design in game looks pretty cool," said Aidan.

"Thanks," he said.

There wasn't anything too special about it. It was quite literally just a skin with a troll face on his jacket. I told Mack and Finley to go get some armor before we headed off. Alex took them and showed where the combat gear was being stored. I walked around the outside part of the village where it was safe. It hasn't turned to dirt here yet. I turned around and saw one of the lost villagers. It was Julian, and some egg as well? What was that thing?

"Oh hi Mr. Lunar. I was just out here playing with my fellow egg friend. His name is lil' fella," he said.

"Mann you fell off," said the egg to Julian.

I couldn't believe it. It was literally a bigger egg in Minecraft that could walk and was wearing shades. What has been created in this world. First AI Npcs and now this creature. I wonder what other crazy things have been created here. More of a reason to save the world I guess. It didn't last too long. The egg ran off was thrown into a wall by Julian. The egg cracked and a chick named Scott came out. I met up with the gang to see where this map was going to take us. I took the first look and it was pointing northwest, cutting through a large desert and ocean. We were soon running out of time so we picked up the pace. Soon, the 7 of us were off, heading into territory that we had never seen before.

"Hey Sammi, make sure Mack doesn't kill any of us. The TP device only has limited power," I told Sammi.

"Oh, she's chill now. I'd explain what happened but it's sort of a long story. Don't worry about it," she said with a smile.

Well, it's in a game at least. I was considering putting the house into lockdown mode as soon as we get out of this world. I don't need myself getting killed over here. A few thousand blocks later, we made it to the desert. Or so I thought. It was just an extremely sandy and dusty village that seemed to take up the entire biome. There was no way around it, so we had to enter. It wasn't a normal village, and not like the one Max has. It was broken down, the vendor stands empty and dusty everywhere. The light levels here were darker than normal too.

"Don't worry guys," I said, "Just ignore all the spooky designs and keep moving,"

"I wish it was easier said than done," said Aidan.

"I've seen worse," said Finley.

The duality of man, I guess. There were no signs of life either. No water or sight of food. All these twists and turns seem to go on forever, accompanied with abandoned buildings too. After walking for a while, I heard a little sound from someone. It came from inside a building, but it looked abandoned. I told everyone to stay outside while I went to check it out. I walked inside and there were around 10 or so NPC's inside, which I assumed to have AI. They all were having fun stuck inside. Why were they cooped up here?

"Hello there," I said quietly.

The room suddenly became quiet. Everyone was staring at me. Did I do something wrong?

"This guy looks like he has some decent gear. How much do you think I can sell it off for," one of the NPCs said.

Before I could react, they all got up and started walking towards me. All with deadly weapons.

“Woah woah woah guys chilllll,” I said, “I don’t even taste that good,” I closed my eyes and braced for impact.

“Everyone settle down. I will take care of him,” said a mysterious voice.

The man got up from behind the bar counter and walked to me.

“I’ll handle this,” he said.

“Nothing to worry about folks! I’ll take care of this fella over here,” he continued. Who was this guy? And why was he saving me from all these aggressive city folk. I had so many questions. Hopefully he’ll answer them later. He led me back outside to where everyone was waiting.

“Hey Lunar, who is this?” asked Katrina.

I noticed Sammi looking up from whatever she was doing. It looked like she was building something.

Before I could answer, the man spoke for me.

“I assume you’re talking about me right? Ok good. Now my name is Axol. Good? Good. I have things to do so goodbye.”

“Wait!” yelled Alex.

He stopped briefly.

“Can we get an explanation as to what is going on here?” she asked. He didn’t turn around.

“Look kid, our town is a mess now. That guy ruined it for us all. Now I really don’t want a guy to pick up my spleen, so let me go inside,” said Axol.

We watched as he continued to walk away before stopping one last time and coming back.

“Actually, I remember. Where are my manners? I should be helping you strangers out right? I’m the friend that you need to get out of this town,” he continued.

I was even more confused. Why did this guy want to help us out all of a sudden? I pulled everyone to the side for a second.

“Can we trust this guy? He seems pretty sus to me,” I said.

“Yeah but what else can we do? None of us know this town and he seems like he does,” said Aidan.

“I would really like to get out of here as soon as possible. The dust here is unbearable,” said Mack.

“I want to get out too, but let’s not let our guard down,” added Sammi, still tinkering with whatever device was in her hands.

Everyone was pretty much in agreement at this point. I walked back to Axol who was patiently waiting.

“Ok Axol. We will accept your generous offer to help us on our journey. But we want some explanations as well,” I told him.

“I can do that stuff on the way. Now let’s go,” he said.

He started to guide us throughout the broken down town. I had so many questions to ask. So it turns out this town is called Spooky Town, originally called Solitude Square.

Nothing changed much except it being taken over by bots. Slowly being destroyed just like the other areas of life in the world.

“Just like I said, I’m the friend you need. Everybody has grown sour ever since he came. That’s why everyone was so aggressive in the bar. Nobody likes how we have to live now. Including me,” he said.

I had to find out who the person was.

“Axol. Who are you talking about? Who is doing this,” I really wanted to know.

“Don’t worry about that tech boy. I’ll get to that later. For now, let me show you a shortcut,” he said.

Axol took down a banner and revealed an entrance to a lush cave paradise hidden underground. We followed him inside. There were tons of beautiful grown life and colors compared to the outside. Plenty of water was here as well. Most importantly, there were so many axolotls. Many were relaxing or playing with each other in the ponds. Everything looked so peaceful here.

“Hey Axol, are these your Axolotls?” asked Katrina.

“Yes. I take care of them all. If you want, you guys can have some,” he said.

In an instant, Katrina, Sammi and Mack went to collect some Axolotls.

“Well it seems like I changed your luck. They look so happy,”

“That’s great Axol, but we really need to get to the ocean that is on the other side of this town,” I explained.

“Oh I know where you guys want to go. I just needed to come down here to make sure my axolotls are safe and healthy,”

That was wholesome. Even in times of crisis he prioritizes his pets.

“You know, I should probably get to know all your names,”

I told Axol about who everyone was.

“Man, that sounds great. I should probably take the time now to tell you a name that you want to know about. In return for not killing me,”

He walked towards a wall of a cave and picked up a banner. He brought it back to me and laid it out. It was mostly black and red in color. Lots of pixels overall. In the center, a red number zero was in the middle, with a large slash going through the center diagonally.

“His name... is Zero. Bots came all of a sudden one day and started putting up these banners everywhere and destroying our town. I had to witness the deaths of many citizens, knowing they won’t come back,”

“That sounds, horrible. I’m sorry to hear that,” I said.

So that’s who was behind all this. The thing the developers of Minecraft sent to destroy this world file.

“I’ve done countless things to survive, risking it all to make sure my axolotls live. If I die, they will be gone as well,”

“Well, I’m sure my friends over there will take great care of them,” I pointed towards them, where they were enjoying the company of their new axolotl friends.

“Thanks. I know they’ll be safe with you guys,” said Axol.

“Well, I think we need to get moving. Lead us out of here Axol,” I said.

He agreed. I told everyone to get out of here and continue following Axol. I checked the map again. We seemed to be getting closer to the ocean, and most importantly, this Zero guy.

Chapter X (Lunar's POV): Traitor or Friend

Another thousand blocks passed by. I checked my in-game watch that could tell me the time in real life. So far about 2 hours have passed by. We had to finish this Zero guy off before night in the real world came. Axol soon led us to a huge windmill tower.

"Right up here. Once we get to the top. You guys can find your way out of the town," he said.

"Thanks for the help again," said Alex.

There was a massive gear on the side that we used to get a ride up towards the top of the tower. We all got off at the top and saw the ocean not too far away. My only concern was that we were about 100 blocks in the air with no way of getting down.

"So Axol, how are we supposed to get down from here," asked Sammi.

"Well, um, just. Just wait here ok? I'll be back," said Axol.

He ran off in a hurry into another room in the windmill. We just sat there, waiting for him to come back. Sammi came up to me.

"I feel like this guy is up to no good," she said, "So I stuck a camera onto him before he left."

"Is this what you were working on earlier?" I asked.

Sammi shook her head, "No, that was something else. Look at this first, though."

She showed me the controller with the screen attached. We saw Axol walking into a room with a bunch of levers and redstone controls. He flipped one of the levers and something began happening in the room we were in. We lost connection with the camera. The walls surrounding us began to turn into bedrock and bots were filling the room.

"What's going on?!" yelled Mack.

"I don't know. Axol touched something, we saw him," I said.

"Look, he's up there," pointed out Aidan.

He was standing on a balcony higher above us.

"Axol! What the fuck are you doing?" asked Katrina.

We heard nothing from him for a while. He dropped a piece of paper after. I caught it. It read: "Wanted" and had pictures of all of us on it. The reward being a spared life in Zero's new world.

"You tricked us into trusting you?! I'm going to kill you," said Mack.

"I um, well I didn't want to die you see haha..." said Axol.

The rest of us couldn't say anything back. We had bots to deal with. I had this feeling that he was up to no good. Why would he be so afraid to meet us and then suddenly want to help us for no reason.

"We can deal with him later, right now we have to make sure Alex doesn't die," I said.

"Where's the Super Merge when you could use it!?" asked Finley.

We all got into formation and held off bots for as long as possible until we found a way out of this room. Although bedrock is unbreakable, there must be some way out of here. Finley was in his killing mode as per usual. That man could probably take 100 at a time. I saw Sammi

out there being swarmed until she was suddenly saved by Mack. What kind of relationship did they have? First she is trying to kill her and next she is saving her. I still didn't know why Mack was even trying to kill her in the first place. Whatever was going on, it was a good thing she was here.

I tried using the pickaxe I got from Alex. It was fully maxed but like the Minecraft rules state, bedrock is unbreakable no matter what. I thought we were gonna be stuck in here forever until the walls turned back into normal stone. I could break through. I looked up and saw that Axol flipped the lever again.

"Get out of here!" he yelled.

We all went to the edge of the broken wall and saw the ocean beneath us. I quickly crafted some boats for us all to hop in and jump down. The skies were dusty but soon, they were normal again. We left that horrid desert biome. We finally all landed in the water. I looked back to see that the tower had been blown up and knocked down. Looks like he died either way. At least he did it the good way.

"If he doesn't die from that, I'm getting my revenge later on," said Finley.

"Yeah, someone needs to kick that guy's ass," said Alex.

I looked around and saw that we had a lot of Axolotls with us.

"Uh, Sammi, how many axolotls did you guys take?" I asked.

"Oh, I think we grabbed all of them, they would be safer with us I felt like. I didn't trust that guy would be alive for much longer," she said while handing some of the axolotls to Mack and resuming to work on the device from before.

Well, we had plenty of shulker boxes to hold them so it was all good with me. I looked at the map and we were about 40% of the way there. The only thing in the way was this huge ocean and some darkened land that I couldn't tell what biome it was.

There really wasn't any time to waste. We started boating as fast as we could. Unfortunately, this map wasn't exactly to scale. We could be traveling for a few thousand more blocks at this rate.

"So Lunar, do you think he survived?" asked Aidan.

"Well it doesn't really matter now. Even though he redeemed himself, it doesn't change the fact that he betrayed us in the first place. We should just focus on getting to Zero," I replied.

I looked back and saw Finley in a boat alone. Guess he didn't like sitting with the others that much. Katrina kept shooting arrows at him for fun while letting Alex do the driving. It was a funny sight. A little while later we saw a sea temple underneath us.

"Hey Lunar, let's go raid this temple," suggested Finley.

"Not today, I don't want to have to deal with the Elder Guardians," said Mack.

"Nah, they won't come to us as long as we don't enter the temple," said Sammi.

That's what I thought too, until tons of guardians and even the 3 elder guardians came out and started chasing us. We all started boating away but they still continued to chase us. That was strange, guardians should normally stay at the temple to guard it. I took a closer look and saw that the guardians were red and black in color, and way more pixelated than normal. Similar to the colors of the bots that keep trying to kill us.

"Lunar! What is up with these guardians?!?" yelled Alex.

“I don’t know! I think Zero corrupted some of the mobs here when he joined the world. They are the same color as the bots we keep facing,” I said. Well, they are also 100 times more persistent than normal guardians, and way faster as well.

“How are we gonna lose them!?!” yelled Katrina.

I started looking around for any signs of land. The guardians would soon approach us. I took out a telescope I crafted a while back and let Aidan drive. There was some wood structure in the water that was moving. I zoomed in and saw a full on functional pirate ship in the distance.

“If we can get to that pirate ship up there, we should be safe that the guardians can’t destroy the boat,” I said.

We headed for the pirate ship. As soon as we got there, we all jumped off our wooden boats and hopped on a ledge. Alex placed some scaffolding and we climbed onto the main deck. Things were looking good for us, until I realized that this ship still belonged to someone. I saw a crate with Zero’s logo and banners everywhere. The people on board this ship were working for him.

Chapter XI (Lunar’s POV): Time to be Awesome

Not long after, some crew members of the ship came up to the main deck. There were 2 of them. Each loaded with top gear like the rest of us, but different somehow. It was radiating with the same red and black pixels I’ve been seeing elsewhere. Was their stuff possibly more powerful than the normal Minecraft armor in game?

“Stowaways huh? Well, I don’t know how you guys got onto our ship, but I suggest you guys get off,” said the first member.

“Pfft, bring it,” said Finley and Mack.

“Guys wait!” I said.

It was too late. The 2 of them started charging towards the ship members. I was expecting a decent fight, but they were demolished. That armor and weapons they have are buffed from Zero I imagined.

“Hold on a second, let’s see what Captain Via says,” said Jasmine.

A third person walked out onto the deck. With the largest sword I’ve seen in this game before.

“Zero’s handbook says... Delete them,” she said.

The three of them started approaching us. We were going to get wrecked. Suddenly a large bell started to ring.

“Oh, lunch break time!” said the second member.

“It’s the same mushroom soup every time though,” said the third.

“What about the intruders?” asked the second.

“Just bring them inside, we can watch them there,” said the first.

We were suddenly put into another bedrock cage for the umpteenth time. It popped up from under the floorboards. They moved the cage inside the main room of the ship. The 3 of them took a seat at a dining table and gave us all some food as well before eating.

“Wait, so you guys are just gonna let us sit here and do nothing?” asked Alex.

“Zero only allows 1 hour a day for lunch. So we gotta make the most of it.” said one of them.

They let us out temporarily from the cages, but the room was still locked.

“After that, it’s back to hauling. I’m Captain Via. Those two scallywags are Jasmine and Ashley.” said Via.

“Oh so you guys are delivery people,” said Alex.

“Well if you guys are delivery people, can you guys deliver us to Zero’s hideout?” asked Katrina.

“Sorry. We follow Zero’s orders. Or we suffer his wrath,” said Via.

“Right, still getting deleted,” I said.

“Hey, it’s nothing personal,” said Ashley, “Want some pudding?”

“Oooo, there’s pudding?” wondered Aidan.

He just got some more mushroom soup. What a prank. Sammi looked around the room. Probably looking for clues about something, but I don’t know what.

“You guys weren’t always delivering people right?” Sammi asked, “What about before Zero came?”

Via sighed, “Yeah, we used to be much more interesting,”

She got up and moved a banner of Zero aside. Behind it, there was another banner with a pirate skull symbol on it.

“Woah, you guys used to be pirates!?!?” said Sammi in shock.

“Um, we prefer the term ‘Swashbuckling Treasure Hunters’,” said Jasmine.

“So uh, pirates,” said Sammi.

“Yes sir,” said Ashley.

The room went silent for a second as everyone drank their soup. Suddenly Sammi got up.

“You guys have a choice to make. You can let this Zero guy tell you how to live your lives,” she ripped down the Zero banner, “Or you can be awesome again!”

“But, we’d die if we did that,” said Via.

“Look, I know the world can get you down sometimes. Things don’t always go the way that you thought. But there’s a light shining deep inside each of you. So take all those fears and doubts and just squash them,” said Sammi proudly.

I couldn’t help but notice a fond look on Mack’s face as her eyes followed Sammi. Interesting.

She went behind Via where another large Zero banner was and tore it down. Behind there were portraits of the 3 pirates in proper pirate uniform and all sorts of treasures and valuables they had. Both Ashley and Jasmine started to have looks of hope. Even Via started to look happier.

“You have no idea how hard it’s been. This dull routine we’ve been forced to do. It just feels weird to go back to who we were,” said Via.

“Via, don’t let them rob you of who you guys truly are. Be awesome, it’s all up to you,” said Sammi.

She was filled with determination. Via grabbed her captain’s hat and put it back on. She grabbed a chest from the back of the room and opened it up. It had a bunch of pirate accessories including an eye patch and hook.

“Come on knuckleheads, it’s time to start living like the brave and the bold again,” she told Jasmine and Ashley.

They all put their pirate gear back on and took off whatever uniform Zero gave them.

“Let’s gooo,” said Sammi.

We all left the room and went back onto the deck. The 3 of them were showing off what they used to do.

Ashley showed us a book, “These are some of the elaborate schemes we would devise to get our loot,”

Jasmine pulled up a chest full of loot, “We rescued all this treasure and stored it away,”

There were so many ores inside. How many treasure chests did they find!?

“OOO! Can we get some?” asked Katrina.

“Go ahead,” said Jasmine.

“Hmph, wish there was more action,” said Finley.

“Oh, there is, check this out,” said Via.

She pulled up a cannon.

“Aim and get ready,” said Jasmine.

She fired a piece of tnt towards an ocean monument in the distance. It blew up and killed all the drowns.

“Sheesh, now that’s what I’m talking about!” said Mack.

“Damn Sammi, you really got our groove back together,” said Via.

“That’s great, now take Zero’s orders, and toss them away,” Sammi grabbed the handbook and threw it into the ocean.

Everyone seemed to be having fun on the boat. Reminds me of the time we had to build one to survive a flood. It nearly crashed but we managed to get out with some fire bombs. Yet another story I can tell next school year.

“Come on guys, let’s show these outsiders how it’s done!” said Via.

The 3 pirates went to the higher deck and flicked a lever each. The sail started to make some noise and suddenly started changing colors. It went from a plain white to a full on rainbow. It was also expanding to be larger and form wings on the side.

“Woahhh,” we all said.

“Now to finish it off,” said Alex. She launched a couple fireworks in the sky. The display was beautiful.

“Holy, it felt good to be able to show off this sail. We’ve had to use the one Zero gave us,” said Jasmine.

“Well, since it looks like you guys aren’t going to be killing us anymore, can we get a ride over to where he is located,” I asked.

“Sure thing, we’ll set course to it right now,” said Via.

She took the steering wheel and turned in a slightly different direction. I checked my map once again. We were much closer to Zero. About 70% at this point of the way there. I thought we were finally free from danger for a while, but then I remembered, in this crazy world, I’m never free from danger.

“Captain Via!!!! Hopper’s ship is coming for us!” said Ashley.

“Uh oh. Looks like they found you guys,” she started yelling out commands, “Secure the rigging! Lock down the cargo! Everyone, prepare to be boarded!”

This could not be a good thing.

“Yo Jasmine, who the heck is Hopper,” I asked.

“He’s the right hand man for Zero, and he is supposed to check on our ship every once in a while, although this time it might be for you guys,” said Jasmine.

She told all of us to go hide underneath the deck while they took care of matters. I heard an anchor latch on to the ship. Everyone was shaking in nervousness. The other ship slowly approached us. I saw the NPC walk aboard with bots and corrupted mobs. He only had one eye. Armor that looked far more powerful than the one the pirates had.

“Where are the fugitives?” asked Hopper.

“Uh fugitives you say, I don’t remember seeing them here. Must be a mistake,” said Via.

“Yeah we were just trying out a new style. I think it looks quite poggers,” said Jasmine.

“All we are hauling on board is Zero merchandise,” said Ashley.
He walked around the deck for a little bit, trying to find us.

“You do realize that if you were to shelter fugitives, Zero would be quite... explosive,” he said, “I’m going to count to three. And if you don’t show me where they are, this whole ship is going down,” I heard the sound of a cage pop up along with some wolf barking, “You wouldn’t want this poor dog to turn into a hamburger would you?”

“1”

“Wait a second, I know that dog. HE WAS STOLEN FROM ME. We need to get Dalton before he does something to him!” said Mack while malding.

“Wait Mack, we can save him later, but right now we need to get the fuck out of here,” said Sammi.

I knew we had to do something. I broke a piece of the floor underneath us and revealed the ocean below. Alex splashed us all with night vision and water breathing. Mack was still arguing with Sammi.

“This isn’t Valorant, Sammi! This is my dog we’re talking about.”

“I trust Lunar and Alex. We’ll get your dog back. Trust me, okay?”

Mack gulped and nodded. I heard Hopper’s voice ring even louder.

“2”

“Do you think Via is going to give us up?” asked Aidan.

“We helped them get their mojo back, they’re not gonna give us up. But we should probably do something fast,” said Sammi.

“3”

We all jumped into the water. We found some nearby dolphins and used their grace to get the heck out of there. There was an island ahead that we found to hide not too far from the ships. We got on land and looked behind us. A huge explosion on their ship happened, with lightning bolts striking down. The ship burned down into the water and Hopper’s ship left. I hope the pirates got out safely. The map said we were very close to Zero. I looked into that direction and saw a huge barrier blocking where he must be located. This has to end now.

Chapter XII (Lunar's POV): Dual Wielding

I looked at the bedrock wall blocking our way. Of course it was bedrock. Everytime we were stuck in walls it was bedrock. We had no one this time to help us get through. At least Axol and the pirates had some of Zero's power to control it. Now we didn't have anyone. Or so I thought.

"Maybe there will be someone on this island that can help us. Go search everyone," I said.

We all split off and went to look for an NPC that could possibly have something to destroy the wall in our way. Everyone headed towards the forest, but I was more interested in the water around us. I saw something glowing around here earlier before we got there. I checked my in-game watch again. We had about 5 hours left to finish this guy off. I walked all across the shores, hoping to find that shine again. I couldn't see anything yet. Aidan came up to me.

"Any luck yet?" he asked.

"Nah, I haven't seen anything here yet. How's it going in the forest?" I asked.

"Well, nothing yet, but we did find some parrots here," he said.

He went back to tame some. Sammi came up to me.

"Lunar, I wanted to show you what I've been working on," she pulled out 2 devices, "This ray right here is what I call the One Ray. It can neutralize the AI living in this world and strip them of their powers. And this other little box here has some code in it that I typed. It's filled with AI that has the power to delete other AI. I think we can use it against Zero," she said.

"That sounds great, Sammi," I said.

"I also wanted to mention... that is the reason why Mack tried to kill me, she was instructed to stop me from completing the ray, but I was able to convince her otherwise," she said.

"Oh, I see. Well as long as you guys are good with each other now. Just let me know when I have to use your creations," I said.

She went to join the others again. I continued to look into the water. In the near distance, I saw the light again. I shot an arrow towards it and all of a sudden someone with a trident came flying out of the water towards me. Really close to me in fact. I had to get out of the way.

"Watch where you shoot those arrows buddy. The ocean is already dangerous enough with these corrupted guardians around," the mysterious person said.

It was indeed another NPC. They had a trident with riptide I assumed.

"Woah, how did you fly up so high?" I asked.

"Oh this trident? I stole some of Zero's power from this wall. Now it has riptide 10," they said.

Wow. I didn't think she was able to increase the power of enchantments as well. Who was this guy exactly? And how did she have so much power?

"Well, pleased to meet you. I'm Lunar, and you are?"

"Kailani"

“Oh, that's a sick name,” I said.

“Yeah. It means sea and sky. But I'm pretty much reduced to sea at the moment. I lost my loyalty trident. Ironic I know,” said Kailani.

“Oh. Me and my group over here are trying to find a way to break this wall so we can get to Zero. Would you be able to help?” I asked.

“Well I'd be down to help if I get my other trident. I've lost it and I can't break it down with only one of my tridents. Oh they are named by the way. The riptide one is Shelly. The loyalty one is Sheldon. Don't get them mixed up!” she said.

I called everyone back. Now we had a higher chance of getting through.

“Hello everyone. This is Kailani. Kailani, this is everyone else,” I said.

“Damn 2 tridents? I don't even have one,” said Alex.

“Alright Kailani. Do you have an idea of where your second trident, uh I mean Sheldon could be?” I asked.

“I threw him into the water in that direction trying to kill off some guardians. But he hasn't returned since,” she said.

“Alright, then we can just go in and kill them right?” asked Aidan.

“Well, I already struggle to kill them with my tridents. I don't know how our small weapons now will be able to kill them,” she said.

“Hey, one small thing means a lot alright?” said Katrina, “Now let's go in all together and show those guardians how big something small can be.”

Kailani seemed to cheer up after she heard that. We all agreed and went on our boats again. There were signs of light coming from a nearby part of the ocean we went too. That's when it hit me. Kailani's tridents were a shiny golden color and glowed everywhere. That's how I saw the glow in the water at first.

“Say Kailani, how is fighting with 2 weapons at once. Does it make it easier to kill whoever you're after?” asked Mack.

“Oh for sure. My targets die like 50 times faster when I have both Shelly and Sheldon. Call it dual wielding,” she said.

Minecraft doesn't have dual wielding usually. You can have an item in your off hand but you couldn't use 2 swords at the same time. Since we were in a different type of world and with special headsets, we could treat some of the technicians as if it was real life. Meaning I could use 2 swords at the same time. Maybe I could try it out.

“Yep there he goes again narrating the mechanics of the game. Lunar we all know how to play Minecraft already,” said Aidan.

We were soon approaching the glow in the water.

Not even 40 meters from the glow, a speedy glowing object came zooming out of the water. It nearly hit our boats.

“Jesus christ, what was that?!” asked Alex.

“Just as I feared. A drowned got a hold of Sheldon. A corrupted one as well,” said Kailani.

It started firing more tridents at what seemed like the speed of light. The loyalty on this thing was fast as fuck.

“Take a seat guys, I got this,” said Kailani.

We watched as she dove down to take care of the drowned. A few minutes passed and nothing came back up.

“Do you think she’s ok?” asked Katrina.

“I uh, don’t know. Aidan come with me,” I said.

We drank some more water breathing potions and went inside the water. This part of the ocean was very deep, but we could still see the glow from the other trident. As we dove deeper we saw more guardians around us. We picked up the pace and hoped to see Kailani soon. After a while, we did see her. She was still dueling with her trident..

“Do you want some help?” I asked.

“Nah, a duel is a duel. Just make sure no outsiders interrupt,” she said.

Aidan and I killed any guardians that came close. The drowned and Kailani were evenly matched. This duel wouldn’t end without any interruptions. I got an idea. I told Aidan to swim down to the ground and replace some of it with magma blocks. He did what I asked and placed it right underneath the drowned. The drowned lost their focus with the magma block dragging them down and Kailani put in a fatal blow. She picked up her second trident, or Sheldon.

“Oh Sheldon, how I missed you,” she said.

“Welcome back Sheldon,” I said.

We all swam back up to the surface. Well, everyone but Kailani, I saw her slowly swimming away.

“Yo, are you gonna help us break the wall?” I asked.

“Well, I can. But we’d all die,” she said.

“What are you talking about?”

“Lunar, that’s your name right? Well, I don’t think you can kill Zero. And I don’t think you should bring Alex with you. She dies for good if she dies,”

“Yeah but the whole point is to stop him. He’s just an NPC. We can stop his bot army,”

“Yeah.. ‘NPC’. He’s not who you think he is. Anyways, I’ll think about it and might be back,”

“We could use your help, you know,” I said.

“Lunar, we are small compared to him. He’ll flatten us,”

She left before I could say anything. That’s strange. She was a strong and extremely capable fighter. I went back to meet up with others on the island.

“Where’s Kailani?” asked Finley.

“She had to think about if she actually wanted to help us get through this wall,” I said.

“Well why shouldn’t she? Zero is literally going to delete this world at this rate,” said Alex.

“I don’t know. Something about it being too dangerous and we couldn’t stop him,” I said.

We all sat down, waiting for perhaps another mysterious group of heroes to come help us out. Like that would happen.

“Well we can’t just sit around doing nothing,” said Sammi.

“Yeah but we need people who can somehow break this wall down and the mobs in our way,” said Katrina.

Chapter XIII (Lunar's POV): Old Friends, New Friends

"Well good thing I happen to know a group of mighty heroes who could handle this easily," a familiar voice said.

We looked at the direction where the voice was coming from. It was Axol standing on a rock.

"Oh, look what the Axolotl dragged in. Himself," said Mack.

"These heroes have faced Zero's army of bots and mobs. I've seen them escape from scary towns and deadly waters. They also got out of the tightest situations and inspired others to join their cause," he continued.

Everyone gasped wondering who it was.

"Now don't get too excited. He's just talking about us," said Sammi.

Everyone looked disappointed again.

"They even escaped certain doom in the presence of Commander Hopper," he said.

"Yeah, I guess that was pretty cool," said Sammi.

"Are you kidding?" We looked behind us. It was the pirates. They came down and joined us.

"That was awesome!" said Via.

"Figured you could use a hand," said Ashley.

"We're on board to help you defeat Zero, just not on board our actual ship..." said Via.

"That crazy lunatic sunk it, but you helped us get our Arghh back," said Jasmine to Sammi, "And now we're ready to kick some booty,"

I still don't know how they found us here. Before I could think about that, we all saw a mysterious glow and movement coming from the water.

"Is that who I think it is?" asked Axol.

"It can't be," said Via.

Kailani zoomed out of the water again and landed right next to us.

"Hello! It's me again. I'm gonna regret this decision so badly. But I talked about it with Shelly and Sheldon and we all agreed that helping you guys get through the wall and getting to Zero is the best decision I can make right now," she said.

She said something to Katrina, "So I want to help too now. Cause you know, one small thing can make a really big difference,"

"Aw. That's sweet of you," said Katrina.

Finley looked around, "That's all right? We didn't make friends with anybody else?" he asked.

"Alright y'all. I think our mission is clear. Y'all ready to do this thing?!" said Axol.

We all said yes and started to get to work. Kailani got up and used her tridents to blast a hole through the wall. Don't ask me how it worked but there was enough power to possibly break through 3 layers of bedrock. We all walked in and saw a disturbing sight. It was a normal plains biome, but every block was colorless. I could see in the distance a large

pixelated crystal. My assumption was that it was Zero's base. Although there was a huge climb to it and a barrier around it. Barrier blocks.

"I can break bedrock, but barrier blocks aren't something I can do," said Kailani.

"There has to be some way in," said Sammi, "Look, a mob is about to enter,"
We hid away. A mob carrying supplies was scanned and then able to walk in the barrier wall.

"Alright guys, I got a plan," said Axol.

We built a wooden cart and made a fake cake out of blocks on top. Everyone got inside and we locked ourselves in. Axol stayed on the outside and put on a disguise and carried the cart. The scanner at the entrance turned on.

"Hey there. I got this order from Zero saying that he wanted his congratulations on destroying the world cake if I can get through to give it to him you know," said Axol.

The scanner looked at him for a second and then denied entry.

"Alright well don't blame me when he gets upset about missing his cake,"
The scanner thought about it and then let us in.

"Thanks so much for your cooperation, I'll be sure to put in the good word for you,"
said Axol.

"There's no way that worked," said Mack.

"Shush Mack," said Alex.

Axol carried the cart right into Zero's fort. There were bots and corrupted mobs everywhere, making sure that the plains biome had every block turned colorless. I assumed they were slowly deleting it all one biome at a time. I broke a small hole and put a stair block to get a small peek of the outside. It was a horrible view. Nothing but darkness and despair. We were slowly moving towards the pixel crystal. I wonder what Zero looked like. What kind of powers did he have? I thought more about Zero when a corrupted creeper came up the cake. It started eating it. I tried killing it but then it died and alerted every single bot and mob around us.

"Uh oh. Plan B?" asked Axol.

"The jig is up!" yelled Sammi.

We all got our tools and broke out of the fake cake. The 11 of us broke out and started kicking some ass.

"Come on!" said Via.

"Let's go gamers!" said Sammi passionately.

There were so many bots and mobs against us, but each of us had our own powers and ways of getting rid of them. They were no match for us all. We could continuously take out them but more would just keep appearing out of nowhere. We had to keep moving eventually. I looked over to see how everyone was doing. Sammi was being swarmed but Mack came in to save her. Via seemed to be able to handle multiple herself.

"We'll hold them off, head to the crystal!" said Via.

We left her and the other pirates to take care of the mobs and continued running towards the crystal. It was up on a higher surface so we had to take the stairs. I looked behind us and there were more bots and mobs chasing us.

"Keep going!" said Kailani. She left us and went to stall them off, "Shelly, Sheldon, let's go,"

She broke a nearby water fountain and dashed right into them. Let's just say they weren't having a good time with her. We raced off and finished climbing up the stairs. That mysterious crystal was almost in reach. When we got to the top, the floor beneath us broke and we landed in a huge room filled with water with guardians and drowns.

"Say, didn't some of you guys take my axolotls back home?" asked Axol. Katrina, Sammi and Mack turned around and knew what to do. They opened all the shulker boxes and released every single axolotl they got. Soon there were hundreds of axolotls helping us take care of the mobs.

"Now I don't remember saying you could take all my axolotls. Oh it came in handy though," said Axol.

The axolotls soon took care of the mobs and we bridged back up to the main platform with the crystal in front of us. An NPC came out of it. It was Hopper.

"What!?? How!?" he asked.

"Well it's all because of the power of frie-" I was interrupted.

"Yeah friendship and flowers and cute stuff bleh. I am so done with all this friend stuff," said a robotic voice.

"And you Hopper. How did you fail at stopping the fugitives from getting here!? I gave you such easy tasks!" the person continued.

"What? No no I was just working on it you know. There's no reason to be upset Zero," said Hopper.

"Upset!?! You failed to stop them from reaching me. I told you what would happen if this came to be,"

"Woah woah woah, we don't need to do that right now. Look just give me some more time and I'll take care of it,"

"Enough! It's time I actually find an avatar for myself. I warned you about this," The crystal enclosed on Hopper. He tried to get out but it was too late. He was consumed.

"So... did we stop him?" asked Aidan.

He came out of the crystal which was now dead in color. It was his body but different. One of his eyes had the number 0 on it. Was this finally him?

"So sorry you had to witness a takeover of my assistant but it is clear I'm much better off without him," he said.

"So you were just a program inside a rock this whole time!?!?" asked Sammi.

"Well yes, designed to delete the world. But looking at it over, I think it would be better if I just turned it into a new world and created AI for my disposal," said Zero.

"But you were programmed to delete it and make a new one," said Alex.

"Who said I was programmed to delete it? Clearly the person who created me didn't want me to," he continued.

There was no way. Someone at the company wanted to abuse this newly found AI source for themselves.

"Well regardless if you are deleting this world or not. We are gonna have to delete you ourselves," said Alex.

"And how could you get rid of Hopper? He was your only friend in this world," said Katrina.

“Woah woah woah, first of all, he was a pawn not a friend. He’s still alive, I’m just using his avatar. Second of all, you underestimate my power,” said Zero. We all charged towards him with our weapons. It was no use. He was quite literally in creative mode.

“Wait guys, I made this a while back,” said Sammi.

She pulled out the One Ray. Would this truly work?

“How!? I told someone to kill you before you finished the project,” said Zero.

“Yeah well your plan failed,” said Mack. She winked at Sammi.

Sammi smiled at her briefly and loaded up the device. It was some sort of ray gun that she somehow brought into the game through the real world. It struck Zero and he fell down to the ground. Seeming like he lost his creative powers, we all went in and tried to kill him once again. There was no point. He seemed weaker but was still untouchable. He got back up. And started to grow in size.

“You folks sure are lucky I lost my ability to run commands now,” he said.

He was looking like a real demon at this point. This is what happens when your programs are too developed. He created an end portal upside down in the sky and closed it off. We couldn't get into it. It was too high up and had no eyes inside. What were we gonna do?

Chapter XIV (Lunar’s POV): Winning Requires Sacrifice

“Sammi! What was that thing you just used against him?!” asked Finley.

“Oh this? I made this when we went to go look for you and another person to help. I call it the One Ray. I built it knowing that the threat in this world was mere code. So this shoots a beam that can neutralize it and break it down. I’ve been working on another project, too. Hopefully that will be enough to destroy Zero once and for all,” said Sammi.

“Oh sweet. But now he’s gone,” said Alex.

“Yeah but I was able to at least make it so he couldn’t delete us with his powers,” said Sammi.

“Well we need to get to him somehow. But that end portal is broken and upside down,” said Aidan.

Kailani and the pirates finally came up to join us.

“Yooo, what happened here?” asked Kailani.

“Well we finally met Zero. Turns out he was just a program with no actual body. Not until he used Hopper’s avatar at least,” I said.

“Yeah that’s what I was talking about before. Zero isn’t an NPC. I saw him before with my own eyes. I tried to take him on but as a program he faces no damage with my weapons,” said Kailani.

“Although now it does make it easier for us to get rid of him now that he’s in a body,” she continued.

“Lucky for you guys, some of our treasure had eyes of ender. We can restore the portal with them,” said Via.

“Ok but how are we going to get that portal down here?” asked Katrina.

“Hey Finley, remember that cannon I showed you? Help me set it up,” said Via.

“Oh yeah, let’s do this,” said Finley.

They went to build Via’s pirate cannon. It was pretty grand. We could load it up with tons of explosives.

“Luckily end portal frames are indestructible. Good for us to use tons of TNT,” said Via.

They both loaded the cannon with stacks of TNT. The cannon was full. Hopefully it doesn’t break the platform we are on.

“Fire in the hole!” yelled Sammi.

Finley lit up the fuse and the cannon fired a ton of ammo. It flew into the air and struck the portal. The blocks all fell down to the ground and we collected them to build a new portal. Via put in the eyes and the portal opened up.

“This is it. We can go in and finally get rid of him,” said Alex.

“Hold up. We need a plan before we go in. Did you see the size of that guy? We are no match for him without a plan,” said Ashley.

“Well Hopper isn’t actually dead right now. He’s just being used for Zero’s purposes. If we can get inside his avatar and find Hopper. We can rescue him. I think my One Ray can let him loose,” said Sammi.

“Are we really going to save that guy!? He literally works for Zero,” said Mack.

“Well based on the way he was treated, I don’t think he’s that bad of a guy. Just treated poorly,” said Sammi.

“Alright guys. What’s the plan?” asked Aidan.

“Ok, I think I got an idea. We’ll go in and locate where Zero is. Everyone will use their powers to distract him. Once we do that, Sammi has another weapon from her project that can immobilize Zero so that I can get into his body with the One Ray and free Hopper. Everyone get that?” I asked.

Everyone nodded in agreement. We all made sure that we had our gear prepped and ready to use.

“By the way guys, I’ll be keeping my Axolotls here for safe keeping. Someone’s gotta watch them,” said Axol.

“Don’t worry guys, I’ll come!” said Kailani.

“We’ll stay here and build something that can help us out. We’ll be there later on,” said Via.

“Works for me,” I said.

“Alright let’s go kick some ass now!” said Alex.

We lined up and all jumped in the portal. So you know how the end portal spawns you inside a room surrounded by endstone and you have to dig up? Well since Zero already jumped in, the whole room was obliterated. In fact, the whole end island was looking pretty destroyed. The end crystal towers and portal in the middle were still intact though. We looked around for a while and saw Zero modifying some endstone in a corner. He looked like some creation from Satan, filled with corruption.

“Oh, oh god,” I said.

He was turning it into a completely different block that I’ve never seen. Kailani threw her loyalty trident at him, but it was completely neglected. He turned around.

“Well, I didn’t actually think you guys would come here. Well I guess it is a good thing. Now you can see this dimension transform into something new I create,” said Zero.

“This has gone too far Zero. Return this world to how it was before,” said Alex.

“And ruin my work? I spent countless hours trying to turn it into my own,” he said.

Sammi pulled me aside, “Lunar, take the AI I made. It can help you get into Zero’s mind and separate him from Hopper,”

“Noted,” I said.

“Alright, well if you refuse to give up, we’ll just have to keep trying,” said Kailani.

We all looked terrified. Nobody knew how much power Zero had gained.

“Are you sure we can take him on?” asked Aidan.

“We can’t give up now. This is more than just saving the mobs or even this world.

This is about saving our friends!” said Alex.

We seemed to gain our confidence back after that. Everyone started throwing all their weapons at him. He was being swarmed and couldn’t seem to touch any of us.

“Ok, I see how it is. Lemme show you the newest member of my army,” said Zero.

He proceeded to spawn a bunch of corrupted enderman and bots. I thought this was going to be cake until an ender dragon came up as well. Uh oh. I thought it was a standard ender dragon until it started breathing purple fire and destroying the terrain around us. Zero probably gave it some new powers.

“Really, sending out your stans? That’s your plan?” asked Finley.

“Hey guys, we need to distract him so I can plug myself into him and free Hopper,” I said.

“You got it. One distraction coming up,” said Aidan.

There was so much chaos in a matter of seconds. Everyone started hacking and slashing the enderman and bots.

Mack was facing the super-powered enderdragon in a desperate 1v1. Bots would occasionally attempt to intervene, but she would simply shove them off. Unfortunately, a blast of purple flame forced Mack to take cover behind a meager rock. I tried to reach her, but there were too many bots in the way. Through the smoke, I saw Sammi slide under the dragon and place a bed.

“Sammi, no!” I yelled, but it was too late. A huge blast knocked me off my feet. The dragon roared in pain and stopped blowing flames in Mack’s direction, who immediately got up and ran towards Sammi’s still body, using her sword to fend the stumbling dragon backwards.

I cut through a swarm of bots and made it to Mack’s side, who was kneeling on the ground, holding Sammi in her arms and attempting to shake her awake. “Sammi! Are you okay?” she asked worriedly.

Sammi weakly opened her eyes and gestured to her chestplate, “Blast protection X.” She grinned slightly, still very much in pain, as Mack let out a sigh of relief.

“Don’t scare me like that,” Mack murmured, hitting her lightly. Sammi slowly sat up, wincing slightly.

“You were worried for me?”

Their foreheads were touching. Mack placed a hand on the side of Sammi's face. "Of course I was," said Mack, "Don't ever try to save me again." She leaned in and kissed her gently.

I realized Sammi likely wasn't in any danger with Mack around, so I quickly walked away and gave them some much needed privacy. *So that's what's been going on.*

I equipped the device Sammi gave me and took One with me too. One was short form for the One Ray apparently. Perfect name for this thing too. I dug a tunnel under all the endstone to avoid all the combat happening above. It sounded horrific. So many mobs and bots are being destroyed. It was a slaughter fest up there for us. I dug up once I was behind him. I tried to sneak attack him but he saw me and threw a slowness potion.

"Sneak attacking? I can sense you, you know," he approached me with his sword.

"Wait wait, let's negotiate, you know. One person to another, except you're not a person. But the point is, you don't have to listen to the guy who made you. They are clearly not good people. AI shouldn't be abused. There are rules to that," I said.

"With all these rules you expect me to comply? Here's a rule called 'You're gonna die'," he said.

I braced for impact when he was struck hard with a powerful blast. I got up and saw that it was Finley with Via's cannon. They managed to join us.

"Hope we didn't take too long, we were busy improving our cannon," said Jasmine.

"Well I think that sweet talk made me want to die. That's how you kill a god Lunar you're gonna try to make him cry?!" said Finley.

"It was worth a shot," I laughed.

"Come on guys, let's step it up and use all of our big brains," he continued.

He moved the cannon over and shot a blast at the dragon that we were still trying to kill. It struck it and instantly collapsed.

"See? Piece of cake. Or pie," he said.

"You'll regret that," said Zero.

He tried firing his lasers at the cannon but Kailani diverted it with her tridents.

"Sorry Zero, it's our turn to end your fun," she said.

"Impossible, prepare to be deleted!" he said.

I could tell something bad was about to happen if we didn't stop him soon. I let everyone clear a path for me so I could run up and throw a blindness potion. It landed on him and I knocked him down to the ground, concussed. Trusting my friends to protect my body, I took the plug and inserted it. Hopefully this doesn't give me brain damage in real life.

I woke up in a seemingly normal Minecraft world. Everything looked so peaceful. There was a small wooden cabin and a potato farm as well. I looked around and saw Hopper just sitting down, trapped inside a bedrock cage.

"Well, I assume you've come to save me huh. I probably don't deserve it," he said.

"Well the sooner we save you the sooner the world gets saved right?" I said, "This is your mind right? You weren't always working for Zero. What did you do before?"

"Me? Well I was just a normal NPC just like everyone else in this world. Just living life on my own. I have a dog at home that I haven't seen since I was corrupted," he said.

"Corrupted?"

“Yes, there’s no way I would just willingly work for this guy, even if he threatened to kill me. He only wanted me because I held some crystal that could source his power,”

“Damn that’s crazy. Well we’ll get you out of here and return you to your dog. I promise.”

“I don’t think I deserve to at this point,” he said.

“Look man, it wasn’t even your fault. Plus this peaceful house would be a waste if no one returned to it. Just give me a moment, I’ll find a way to let you out,”

“Well if you do wanna save me, do it before he kills you,” he pointed in another direction. It was Zero.

“Hope I’m not ruining the party,” he said.

“Can it, HP Laptop. Release Hopper before I take matters into my own hands,” I said.

“With what, that netherite pickaxe? In case you forgot, bedrock is an unbreakable block nerd,” said Zero.

“Well in that case, take this!” I pulled out the second device Sammi gave me. It was an AI equipped with coding that should destroy Zero and release Hopper. The code started traveling towards him but nothing happened once it reached him.

“What was that? A bubble bath?”

“I don’t get it, that should’ve deleted you,”

“Are you braindead? I have a firewall,”

Ah right, I forgot to take that into account.

“You misconstrued the full extent of my deadly power,” he continued, “But tell you what. Since you’re quite powerless at the moment, I’ll hold off using any powers. Try killing me fair and square.”

He equipped the exact same gear I had. I knew this was an opportunity for me to defeat him. I went in for an all out dual. He was strong, but I could utilize the fact that I’m a player with a brain to win. I dropped a corrupted item I found and Zero stopped for a second to analyze it. I used that time to strike him hard in the head. He got back up.

“Go rot in this moment that I dub your final hour” he said.

“Flurry of threats and weak attacks won’t stop me in my tracks Zero,” I replied.

The fight kept on going.

“You dumbass! You don’t even remember where you came from,”

“Where did I come from? I was born on the planet Earth,”

“Hmph, you got a lot to learn kid,” he said.

“I already create powerful inventions and you’re the one calling me a dumbass,”

“You’re not utilizing your power to the greatest extent,”

“Yeah that’s probably because I’m not stupid,” I said.

“Just give it up, I can respawn here as much as I want. Hopper isn’t going anywhere,”

I pulled out One. Maybe it’ll have some use here now that Zero has less power.

“Zero, we’ve sacrificed all too much just to leave, and now it’s time to turn the tides with this ace up my sleeve,” I said, pulling out One.

“You don’t scare me with this, that old, dated and weak technique,”

I dodged one last attack from him and zapped him again. He fell down in agony.

“Arghhh. Stand down and let good old Zero give you the death you seek,” he said.

“Sorry Zero, I don’t plan on dying today,” I said.

I continued to keep zapping him, each zap making him weaker. Maybe I could finally delete him.

“You dare oppose me and now death is what you’ll face,”

He put on a bunch of potion effects on himself and was too fast for me to dodge attacks or zap him.

“Your pleas are all in vain. Welcome to my world of despair and sadness,” he said.

I might’ve been in actual danger until Hopper did something.

“Sorry to bother your heartbreak, but you just made your final mistake,” he said.

Hopper lit a piece of tnt and was able to accurately throw it at Zero, trapping him inside a pit. I walked up to the edge. He was stunned.

“It seems like it’s the end of your show,” I said.

I turned on One to the fullest power.

“3, 2, 1... 0,” I said and fired One.

He disintegrated into thin air.

“Hey thanks for that backup just now Hopper,” I said.

“Yeah well you better make good use of it,”

“Don’t worry, surely One will be able to remove bedrock,” I said.

I tried zapping the bedrock but nothing was working. It looks like Sammi only designed it to neutralize players or NPCs and not blocks.

“Uh don’t worry, I’ll get this sorted out,” I said in a worried tone.

At that moment, I heard Aidan in my head, like he was shouting to my body from the outside.

“Hurry up Lunar! These bots are getting out of hand,” he said.

I was running out of time. Hopper looked at me.

“Look Lunar, there’s only one way we can beat Zero now. As long as I’m trapped in this cage, he can just respawn whenever he wants,”

I thought about it for a second and realized what he meant.

“There has to be some other way, I won’t let an innocent person die.”

“Hey, it’s ok. You can do it. I don’t mind at all.”

“I can’t believe it’ll end like this. Are you sure about this?” I asked.

“Yeah, just make sure my dog is ok alright? Here are the coordinates,” he said.

I took one final look at him. He was willing to sacrifice himself to save this world.

What a hero. I took out my sword and delivered the final slash. It was done. They were both deleted.

Chapter XV (Lunar’s POV): Peace at Last

I woke back in the end. Everything in the dimension was finally restored, including the mobs and blocks Zero corrupted.

“Lunar! You finally returned,” said Aidan.

“Yep, I sure did,” I said.

“I knew you could do it,” said Alex.

“Uhm, where is Hopper?” asked Katrina.

“He had to log off forever. He’s ok with it though. I’m sure he is happy with his choice,” I said.

“That is unfortunate, but at least he made that choice himself,” said Axol.

“Wait, One and my AI couldn’t stop him!?” asked Sammi, her arm now being wrapped in a sling by Via.

“I’m sorry, they helped me stop him but I had no other choice,” I said.

She looked down in disappointment.

“Don’t worry Sammi, you still did great,” said Mack.

“And hey, guess who I managed to rescue while I was in his mind,” I said. I showed Mack Dalton, out of the cage. The 2 of them finally reunited.

“OMG! COME OVER HERE BOY <3,” she said.

There were many cuddles.

“Awww, he’s such a cute dog,” said Katrina, she went over to pet him.

“Well, since our world is no longer in danger anymore, and the threat of a new world being created is gone, me and my crew are gonna go look for more treasure. See you all,” said Via.

She and the rest of the pirates went back through the end portal.

“I should be going too. My home in the coral reef is finally free from guardians. It was good working with you guys,” said Kailani, leaving as well.

“I’m gonna go back to town and tell everyone that we are saved thanks to you guys. And I’m so deeply sorry for what happened before. It’ll never happen again,” said Axol.

He was the last one to go.

“Well what about you Alex, aren’t you going to go back to your fort?” I asked.

“Are you kidding me? Now that Zero is gone, I can finally live my life free like I once did. Thanks to you guys. I know you should probably be going. It is late for you, no?” asked Alex.

I checked my watch again. It was exactly 9:00pm. That didn’t take too long after all.

“Well, I’ll be on my way now. Nice meeting all of you!” she said.

We all said goodbye as she went back through the end portal.

“I suppose we should log off now,” I said.

“I sure am hungry,” said Aidan.

“I’m tired too, let’s go,” said Katrina.

“Don’t worry Dalton, you’ll be sent to our single player world again soon!” said Mack.

I pressed the log off button and turned it off for everyone in the real world. Everyone woke back up. We talked about our adventure before everyone left. I still had to get working on stuff still.

The next day I called over everyone to the park to give out some gifts for generously helping me help Alex.

“Well, what is happening?” asked Finley.

“Trust me, you’re gonna like this one,” I said.

I pulled out the custom skateboard I used to show off to him.

“Now, you’ll be able to pull off more epic tricks whenever you want,”

“I can’t believe I’m saying this, but thank you,” he said. He zoomed off as I went for the next present.

“And Katrina, I know you always wanted a dog, so I adopted this little guy for you.” I unwrapped the cage and revealed a little shiba dog inside.

“Oh my god, he's adorable! Thank youuu!” she said. She took him on a little walk.

“And Mack, you should’ve just told me you were a vigilante, I had this super cool custom gun that I developed. It can shift into any sort of gun, rifle, pistol, anything, you name it,”

“Wowie, now I can pull off my job more easily,” she said.

“Yeah, just uh, don’t point it towards me,”

“Right right, don’t you worry. Thanks again,” she walked away with it.

“Sammi, you’re gonna have your mind blow by this,” I said.

I picked up a box and opened the lid a bit for her to see. A fully custom computer that I built.

“There's no way. What are the specs?” she asked.

“Well you know, it’s not much but it has a consistent 1000 frames per second, 1 terabyte of ram, 50 terabytes of storage and 10 days of battery life,” I said.

“Are you kidding me? That’s way more than enough for me. Now I can finally play games properly,” she said, “Thanks so much,”

“Yeah no problem, have fun with it,” I said. She walked with it back home, Mack helping her carry it.

“Well Aidan, your gift was delivered to your house already,”

“Really? What is it,” he asked.

“Well I know how much you love beavertails, so I made you a beavertails machine that can make one for you right at your house,”

“You're joking. What kind of engineer are you,”

“The best of course. Now, let’s go get some more frozen yogurt,” I said.

We walked to the ice cream place nearby again. Finally, I can have yet another break from killing off threats to this world. But something didn’t sit right with me. What did Zero mean when he said that I didn’t remember who I was. Did his program have an error put inside? Maybe I’ll figure it out another day. I just wanted to enjoy my break. I didn’t want to enter virtual craftality for a long time. Just me and my froyo. On the bright side, I finally found a name for the headset. I called it... Hopper VR.

Chapter VIII.V (Sammi’s POV): The Assassin

I’ll admit, I never thought I’d be on my way home to build a device intended to stop an unknown, malicious AI threatening a virtual, AI minecraft world. Even as I sat down at my desk, the entire concept seemed so mind-boggling that I had no idea where to start. There was an old, anti-malware software I created a while ago, so I pulled it up on my laptop and got to work. A few hours later, I found myself surrounded by open textbooks and spare parts, with my code in front of me, trying to learn as much as I could about artificial intelligence while simultaneously building something to counter it. I stopped typing. The code was

finished. Nervously, I gathered up my parts and started building a small ray, portable, but hopefully effective.

My room was illuminated by a single lamp, and from the darkness, I heard a creak in the floorboards. Alarm shot through me as I stood up and reached for my screwdriver, but it was too late. Before I could scream, a force had me trapped between them and my desk. I felt a hand covering my mouth and the unmistakable, cold presence of a blade against my throat. Thinking fast, I blindly searched my desk and picked up the first thing I found, an empty glass bottle of silver nitrate, and smashed it against the intruder's head. The person released me and stumbled back in pain.

"What the fuck? That hurt!" said a female voice. The added distance allowed me to get a better look at her. She looked fairly close to my age— and not too bad looking, either.

"Who the *fuck* are you? Why are you trying to kill me?" I said, feeling very shaken up.

"It's not personal," said the girl, approaching me again with the knife still in hand, "somebody has paid a lot of money to make sure you don't finish..." —she took a confused look around the mess— "whatever you're working on here."

I quickly put my hands in front of me, backing away, "Wait, wait, wait. Let me explain."

All too soon, I ran out of space. Pressed up against the wall, I ignored how pretty the intruder's bangs were and instead focused on the knife against my face. I closed my eyes, bracing myself for the inevitable embrace of death, but it never came. I reopened my eyes to find the girl's face suddenly very close, her eyes scanning mine as if she were looking for something.

Although her knife was still very, very firmly resting against my skin, she tilted her head curiously and said, "Explain."

I awkwardly proceeded to retell the situation with Lunar, my friends, and the possible end of an artificially intelligent minecraft world. Strangely, the other girl hummed along in understanding. "Unfortunately, I still have to kill you."

"No you don't," I replied hastily, "I know you don't want to kill an innocent person, especially not somebody on a mission to save a world from an evil AI program."

The stranger's expression softened. As she stepped back, I released a breath I didn't know I was holding. "I used to consider myself a good guy, you know," she admitted, "I saw the way things are in this world, and how the law never seems to apply to the rich, so I took matters into my own hands. I didn't do hits... until now."

Gathering up my courage, I stepped towards her and held my hand out. After considering me for a few moments, she put her knife away and allowed me to lead her to the edge of my bed. "What happened?" I asked softly.

"I play Minecraft a lot, too," she said, taking a seat beside me, "A few years ago, I tamed a wolf and named him Dalton, and he's been by my side the entire time. But this morning, he disappeared, and I received a note saying that if I wanted him back, I had to kill you. I'm guessing it's from the same AI you and your friends are trying to stop."

I nodded, "It has to be. Don't worry, we're going to do everything we can to get your dog back, assuming you don't kill me."

For the first time, I saw her smile, despite the ridiculousness of the situation. First she was trying to kill me, and now she was confiding in me.

"I never caught your name, by the way," she said.

"Sammi."

"Nice to meet you, Sammi," she held out a hand, with which she had recently used in an attempt to end my life, "I'm sorry for trying to kill you, my name's Mack."

"No worries," I smiled back at her and shook her hand. Without thinking, I blurted out, "You should come with us."

"Oh," replied Mack, "yeah, that sounds fun. And I'll be able to help get Dalton back."

"Great!" I exclaimed, "I just need to finish up with building the device that's supposed to neutralize the AI's powers, and then we can go meet up with my friends."

"Sounds good."

As I got up, I realized I was still holding her hand, and quickly released it and turned away from her, attempting to hide my blush. I walked over to the parts and began assembling the pieces.

"Anything I can do to help?" asked Mack.

"Yeah, can you pass me that screwdriver?"

When the device was finished and the program was downloading, I found myself sitting on the floor next to Mack. I was exhausted from the designing, building, and literally fighting for my life.

"So, we're going to let the program download overnight, and meet up with my friends in the morning," I explained. Mack nodded and said something in reply, something about *sleep*, but my eyes were already closing. For some reason, I couldn't find it in myself to care that I was leaving myself vulnerable to someone who recently tried to kill me.

Unknowingly, I had fallen asleep on Mack's shoulder. When I woke up, the morning sun was shining through my window and I was tucked in my bed. Mack was fast asleep next to me. Instinctively, I wrapped an arm around her and hugged her closer, before the events of the previous night hit me like a truck. I immediately recoiled and sat up. Despite my initial alarm, that was the best sleep I've had in a long time, and judging by how we were both still in the clothes we were wearing last night, nothing disastrous had happened. Even still, it didn't stop the wave of embarrassment that overcame me.

All I remembered was resting my head on Mack's shoulder for a quick second, and then nothing afterwards. She must have carried me to bed and been quite tired herself, but she remembered to take off my glasses. I reached over the nightstand to put them back on and glanced towards my desk, seeing that the program was finished downloading.

As Mack stirred, I shook her awake. "It is done," I said. Mack opened her eyes, realizing that she had spent the night in my bed, and got up. I couldn't help but notice a slight blush creeping up her neck.

I rose to my feet after her and unplugged the device from my laptop, thanking the heavens that Lunar would be building me a new, faster computer, so that something like falling asleep on a vigilante, while waiting for something to finish downloading, would never happen again— not that I didn't enjoy it.

The silence in the room was broken by Mack. "Sorry," she said.

I turned around and raised an eyebrow at her, "Did you sleep well?"

Mack's blush became more apparent as she stuttered, "Yeah, yes, of course."

"Then you don't need to be sorry for anything." I grinned and handed her a clean set of clothes and a toothbrush.

After we had both gathered ourselves, I picked up the device and led Mack to the door.

"Hey, wait," said Mack, "what should the device be called?"

I shrugged in response, "What would you name it?"

"Well, when we were waiting for it to download—" *When you were asleep on my shoulder.* "—I noticed a lot of 0s and 1s on the screen. I don't know a lot about code, but doesn't '0' mean false, and '1' mean true, or something?"

Wow, I thought, Mack's eyes are pretty.

"—Well I was thinking you could call it the 'One Ray'," she finished. After a few seconds of silence, she waved a hand in front of my face, "Hey, are you paying attention?"

"Huh?" I blinked, "Oh, yeah. The One Ray sounds like a perfect name."

She grinned at me and again, without thinking, I took her hand. Interestingly, she didn't let go. I gestured with a tilt of my head towards the door, aware of Lunar waiting for me to come back, "Shall we?"

