

‘Is that normal?’

‘He’s bad today.’

‘Wouldn’t it be kinder? I mean, surely, there’s quality of life to consider?’

‘What are you saying?’

‘Have him put down, Lionel.’

‘You wouldn’t say that if he was human.’

‘I think I would.’

‘But you’re a doctor. There’s an oath, isn’t there, about preserving life?’

Eve hangs her head, ill at ease with her own hypocrisy, while Lionel reverently kisses Buddha’s forepaws – ‘It’s all right, Budds, it’s okay’ – making it clear he’ll not allow one whisker to be harmed.

‘I’ll take him to the bedroom. He won’t offend you in there.’

‘I didn’t mean to upset you,’ she calls. ‘I’m sorry.’

Except for the errant button, Eve has refastened her blouse when he returns. ‘You’re grieving,’ she says. ‘It’s not the right time for you. For us. And I apologize for what I said about your cat. Forgive me?’

Lionel can’t look at her. They might have curled up dozily together. There’s no doubt he wants to forget about everything. But her disgust is a blemish.

Lionel taps his lip. ‘Okay,’ he says. ‘But –’

‘Shh,’ she says. ‘You don’t have to explain.’

**@GameAddict (#23756745): 30:7:27**

If you think you can recognize characters from the grey world on the Game Layer the chances are you’re going crazy, right? But you know – it’s an easy mistake to make because you do know them. Those princesses, elves and warlocks are familiar because they’re your family. You spend more time with them than anyone on earth.