



Prologue
Secret Rift

When the apricot flowers were in bloom and rain fell on their petals, I stole a diary of a young lady and accidentally touched a wonderful buried experience.

Rather than looks, I first notice the secret rifts of people. Where the sun never sets, the azure sky is never swallowed by the night. Everyone is different. However, it sometimes dries

up there and is overshadowed by eclipses.

... **THERE IS A SECRET** ...

*I can see people's inner worlds,
which I call Secret Rifts.*

*Don't worry,
I'm not a bad person.
To be honest,
I am not a human being.*

Let me introduce myself. You should know me. I am always by your side. I circulate in your lungs, sit in a secluded room, roll in a flowery garden, and soar in the blue sky. I surround the mountains and sea. I am in every corner of the earth. I am the necessity of life. I have always





been so gentle that many people ignore my existence.



It was such an endless time from afternoon

to night in that town. The sunset shining through
the window was still so chilly but dazzling.

It is a simple story, about among other things:

- ❖ A game
- ❖ Two blossoming ladies
- ❖ A period of restlessness and struggle in adolescence





Chapter 1

A Conundrum Of Memory

Can you believe that two people only take a week to go from strangers to bosom friends?

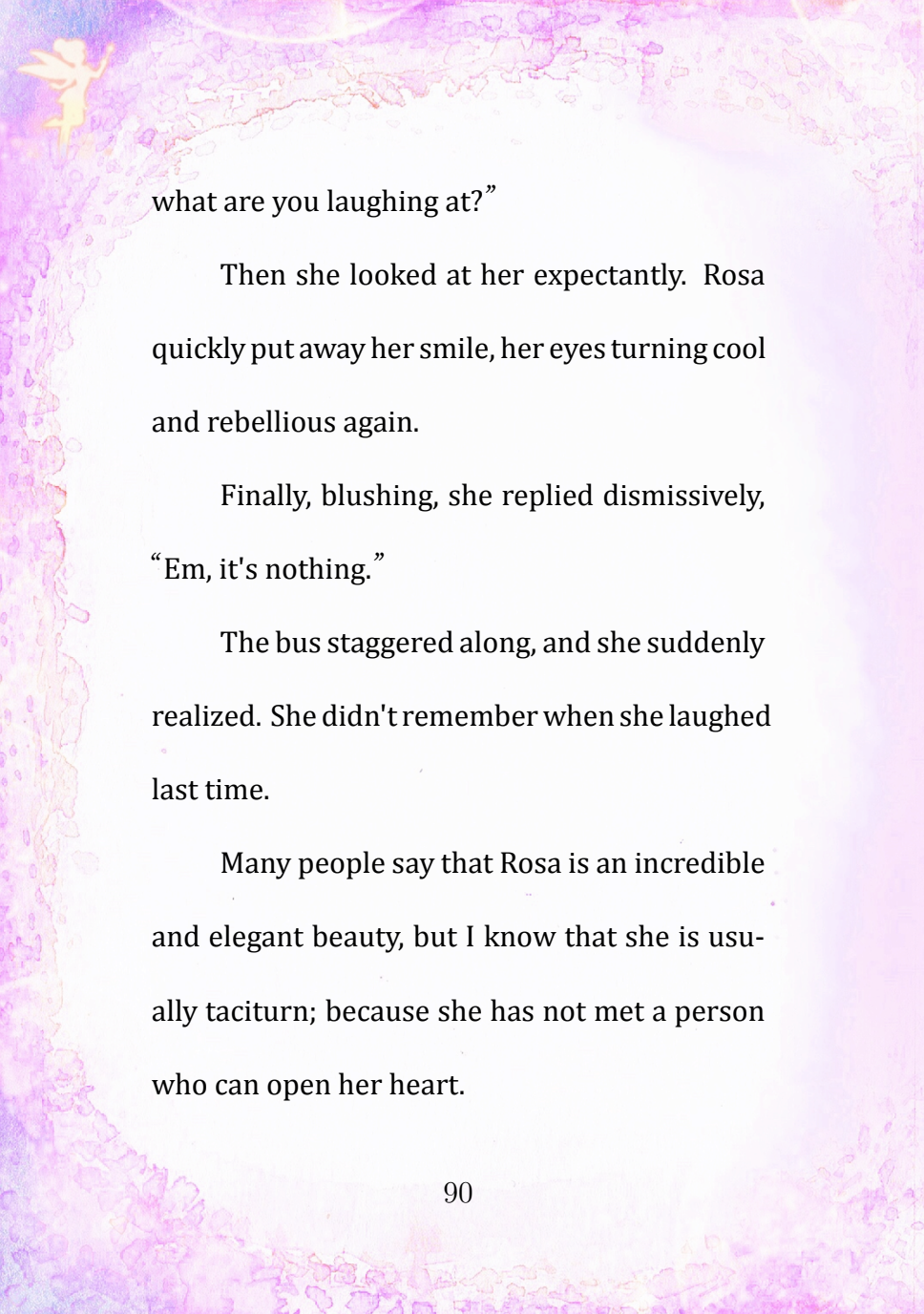
Two months ago, morning dew was still hanging on the sprouts, and a bus was beside a school. The students were skylarking. Amidst the laughter, the bus started, and the tree trunks slowly fell backward. There was a lady who was distinct from others. She clung in the second row

by the window. She threw her bag aside. Her long messy hair casually draped over her shoulders, and her chin was resting on her hand on the window frame. Livid dark circles around her eyes concealed a bit of depression and a few pimples described her tiredness as if she was about to fall asleep in the next moment. Her thoughts drifted away as the bus shuttled through the city's bustling streets. Her eyes suddenly became tender and soft as water.

The corners of her mouth rose, and she bursted out laughing.

In the front seat, Catherine asked, “Rosa,





what are you laughing at?”

Then she looked at her expectantly. Rosa quickly put away her smile, her eyes turning cool and rebellious again.

Finally, blushing, she replied dismissively, “Em, it's nothing.”

The bus staggered along, and she suddenly realized. She didn't remember when she laughed last time.

Many people say that Rosa is an incredible and elegant beauty, but I know that she is usually taciturn; because she has not met a person who can open her heart.

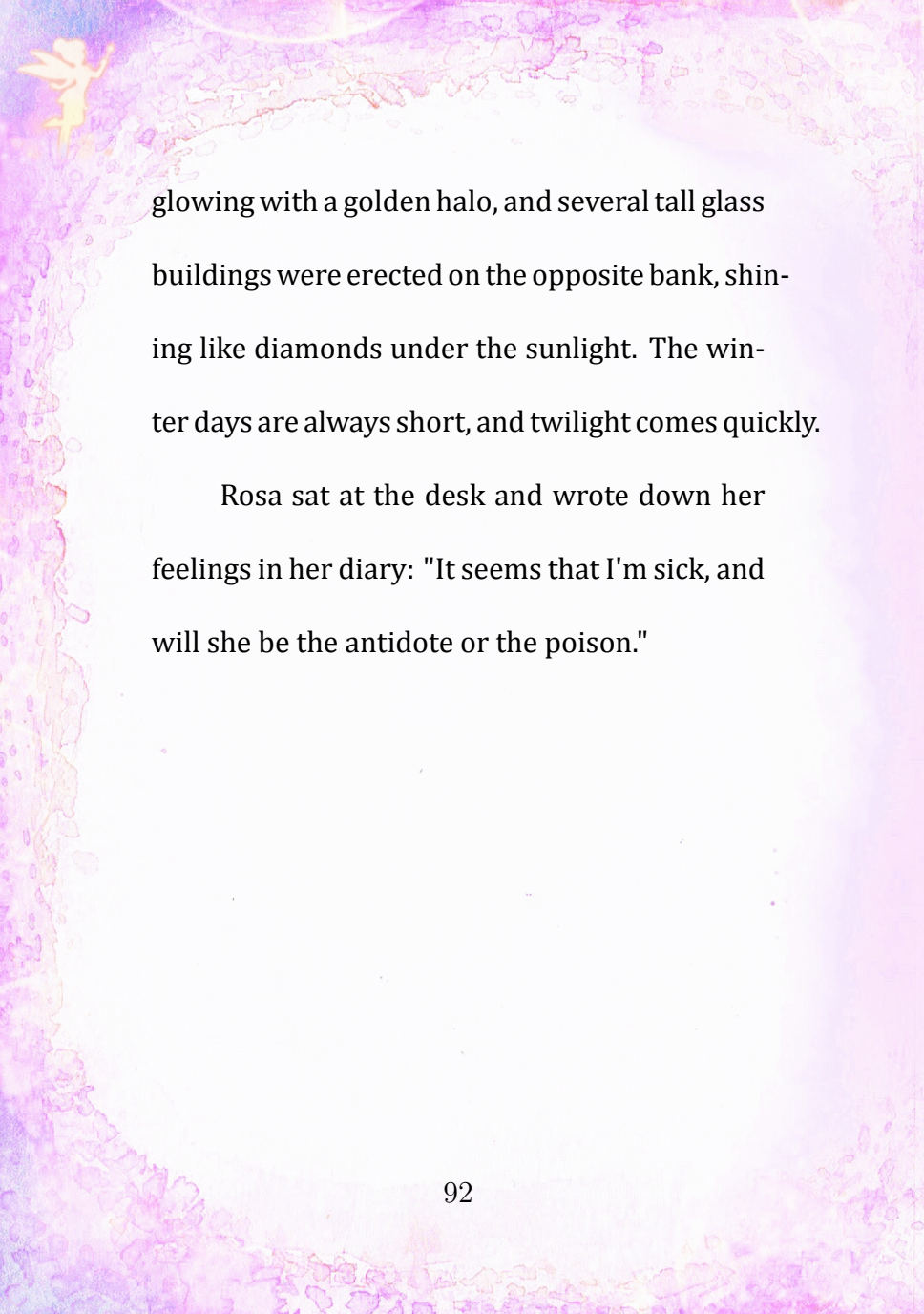
... **THERE IS ONE THING** ...

*Rosa is an astonishingly pretty girl.
Faint eyebrows on the snow-white jade-like skin,
a pair of intriguing eyes,
and unique three eyelids.
Probably the only fly in the ointment is her round nose.
She is also a perfectionist,
always wearing delicate makeup,
like armor to protect herself.*

After school, Rosa walked home slowly. She was alone in the room. Rosa lay on her bed, staring at the texture of the ceiling. She looked down at the surging Meguro River⁶ through the enormous windows in a daze. The limpid river was

⁶Meguro River: Located in the heart of Tokyo. It flows through Setagaya, Meguro, Shinagawa and empties into Tokyo Bay.





glowing with a golden halo, and several tall glass buildings were erected on the opposite bank, shining like diamonds under the sunlight. The winter days are always short, and twilight comes quickly.

Rosa sat at the desk and wrote down her feelings in her diary: "It seems that I'm sick, and will she be the antidote or the poison."

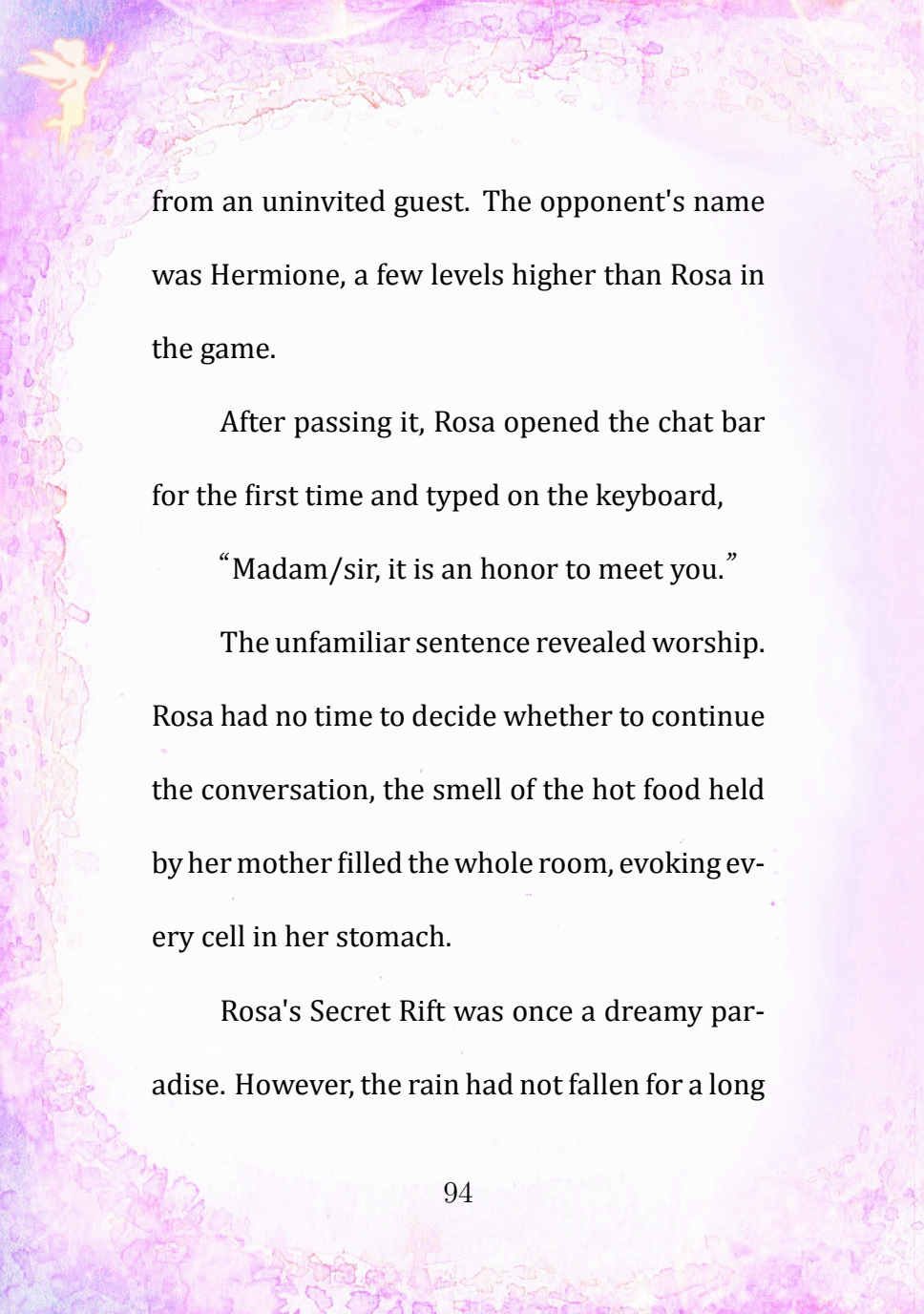
Chapter 2

An Unexpected Encounter

It happened on that snowy night four days ago, when snowflakes were whirling in the sky like a myriad of feathers outside the window, the sky and the earth were vast, and the burning charcoal basin was crackling. Rosa stayed on the sofa in the corner, playing with the iPad. She saw the Flipped in Love⁷ waving to her. Opening the game, she received a friend request

⁷“Flipped in Love” is a simulation game.





from an uninvited guest. The opponent's name was Hermione, a few levels higher than Rosa in the game.

After passing it, Rosa opened the chat bar for the first time and typed on the keyboard,

“Madam/sir, it is an honor to meet you.”

The unfamiliar sentence revealed worship. Rosa had no time to decide whether to continue the conversation, the smell of the hot food held by her mother filled the whole room, evoking every cell in her stomach.

Rosa's Secret Rift was once a dreamy paradise. However, the rain had not fallen for a long

time. Now the flowers had withered, the stream had dried up, and even the sun seemed so pale. The cold wind blew through the bare grass; Rosa lay bored at the end of the Secret Rift, staring at the bleak scenery but unable to do anything. Amid this Secret Rift, there was a small hill beside her and a cave in the mountain, in which lived two little elves, Jocelyn and Jada. The two elves always held different views. One was bold and innovative; the other was stubborn and old-fashioned. The Secret Rift was like a maze full of challenges.





... **HERE IS A THING** ...

*There is a barrier on the periphery of everyone's Secret Rift,
and they always guard their own masters.
At least that's what I see.*

After dinner, Rosa looked out the window at the snowflakes fluttering in the sky like catkins in spring and could vaguely see the city's twinkling lights. She joined Hermione's team, and there seemed to be an invisible force pulling the two of them together. First, the two exchanged basic information. Hermione said she was a girl, only one year older than Rosa, living in another country.

“It's so late; aren't you going to bed yet?”

Going to bed early is good for your health”, Hermione sent a message in an adult's tone.

Hermione was afraid that chatting too long would disturb Rosa's sleep, and Rosa was sleepy. They still had many words to say, but how they thought about each other made me laugh. Human beings are such a strange species. They chatted until the early morning of the next day, and the freshness stimulated the two of them. However, the fantastic night was short, and several snores from her mother entered Rosa's ears, and she had to say goodnight and go to sleep.





... **THERE IS ONE SCENE** ...

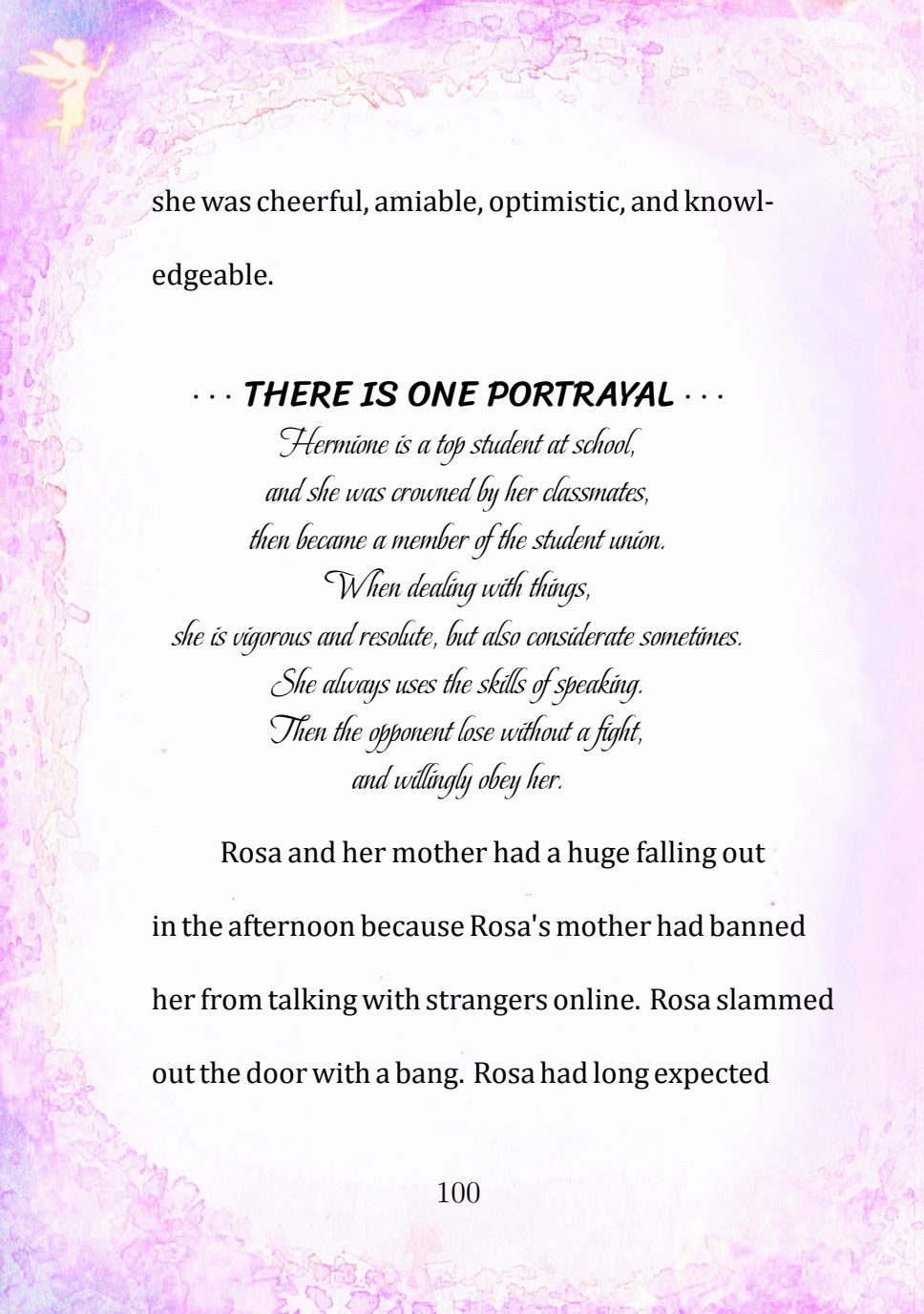
*That night,
Rosa had a faint smile on her face.*

Chapter 3

Ready To Uncover The Veil

In the afternoon of the next day, the winter sun was high, and the warm sunlight fell on the mottled snow, which gradually melted. They chatted in the game every day. Hermione seemed to be there all the time, always returning in seconds. The two talked about the game guide to their lifestyles. Hermione and Rosa had different personalities. Hermione had a strong aura;





she was cheerful, amiable, optimistic, and knowledgeable.

... **THERE IS ONE PORTRAYAL** ...

*Hermione is a top student at school,
and she was crowned by her classmates,
then became a member of the student union.*

*When dealing with things,
she is vigorous and resolute, but also considerate sometimes.*

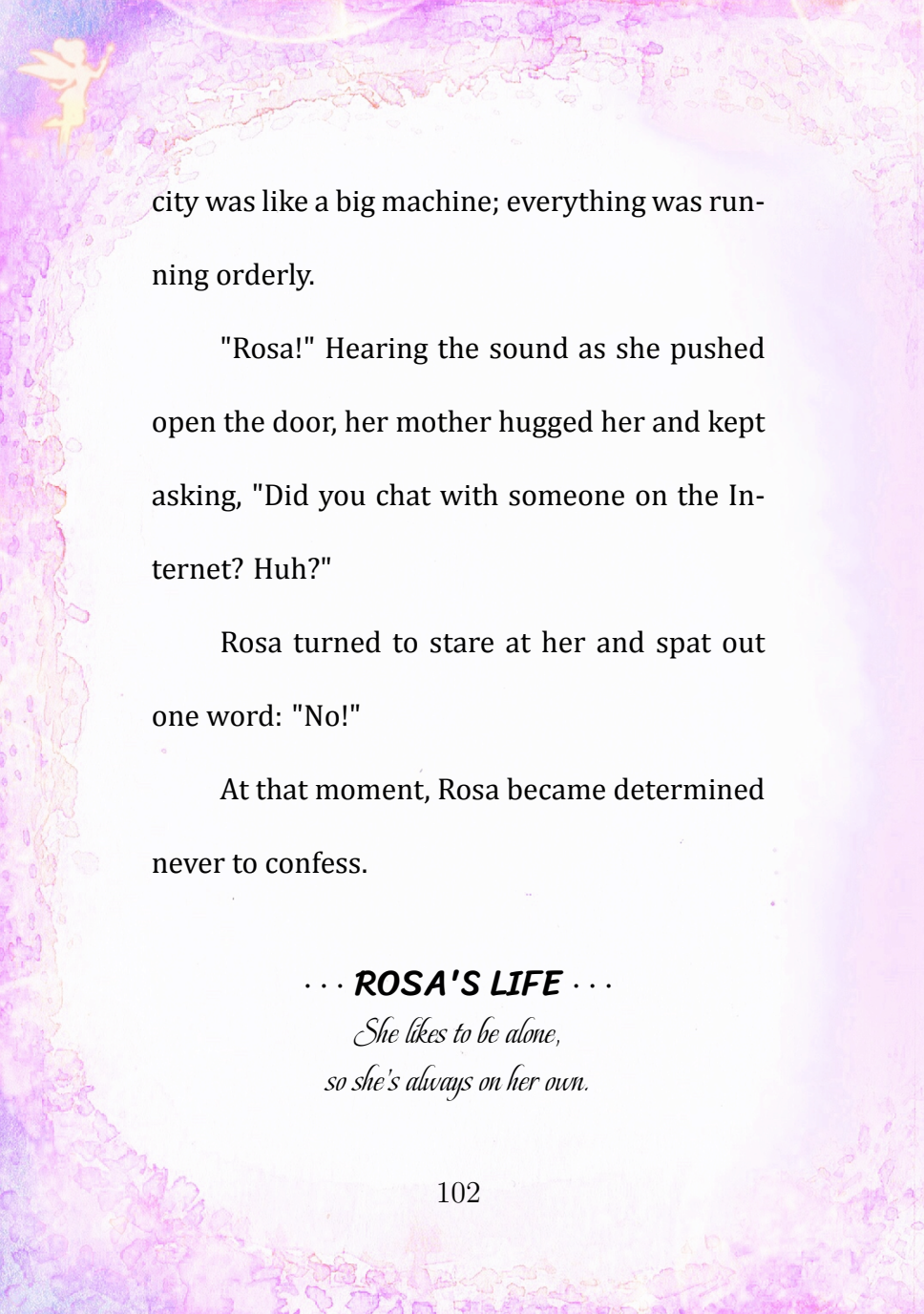
She always uses the skills of speaking.

*Then the opponent lose without a fight,
and willingly obey her.*

Rosa and her mother had a huge falling out in the afternoon because Rosa's mother had banned her from talking with strangers online. Rosa slammed out the door with a bang. Rosa had long expected

this reaction from her mother and still held out illusory hopes. Rosa watched the sunset turn the sky blood red. Then, when there was only a slight afterglow in the sky, she walked to a river beach. Stretching her feet into the icy-biting river water, she let out a "hiss" from the cold, as if only in this way could he distinguish between dream and reality. Her gloomy face slowly relaxed. Rosa walked home leisurely. She looked up at the starry sky; the stars eclipsed, not as radiant as the colorful signs in the commercial street. Some people were busy hawking; some people rushed home with their briefcases. The





city was like a big machine; everything was running orderly.

"Rosa!" Hearing the sound as she pushed open the door, her mother hugged her and kept asking, "Did you chat with someone on the Internet? Huh?"

Rosa turned to stare at her and spat out one word: "No!"

At that moment, Rosa became determined never to confess.

... **ROSA'S LIFE** ...

*She likes to be alone,
so she's always on her own.*

She repeats each day like a programmed robot.

Suffocated.

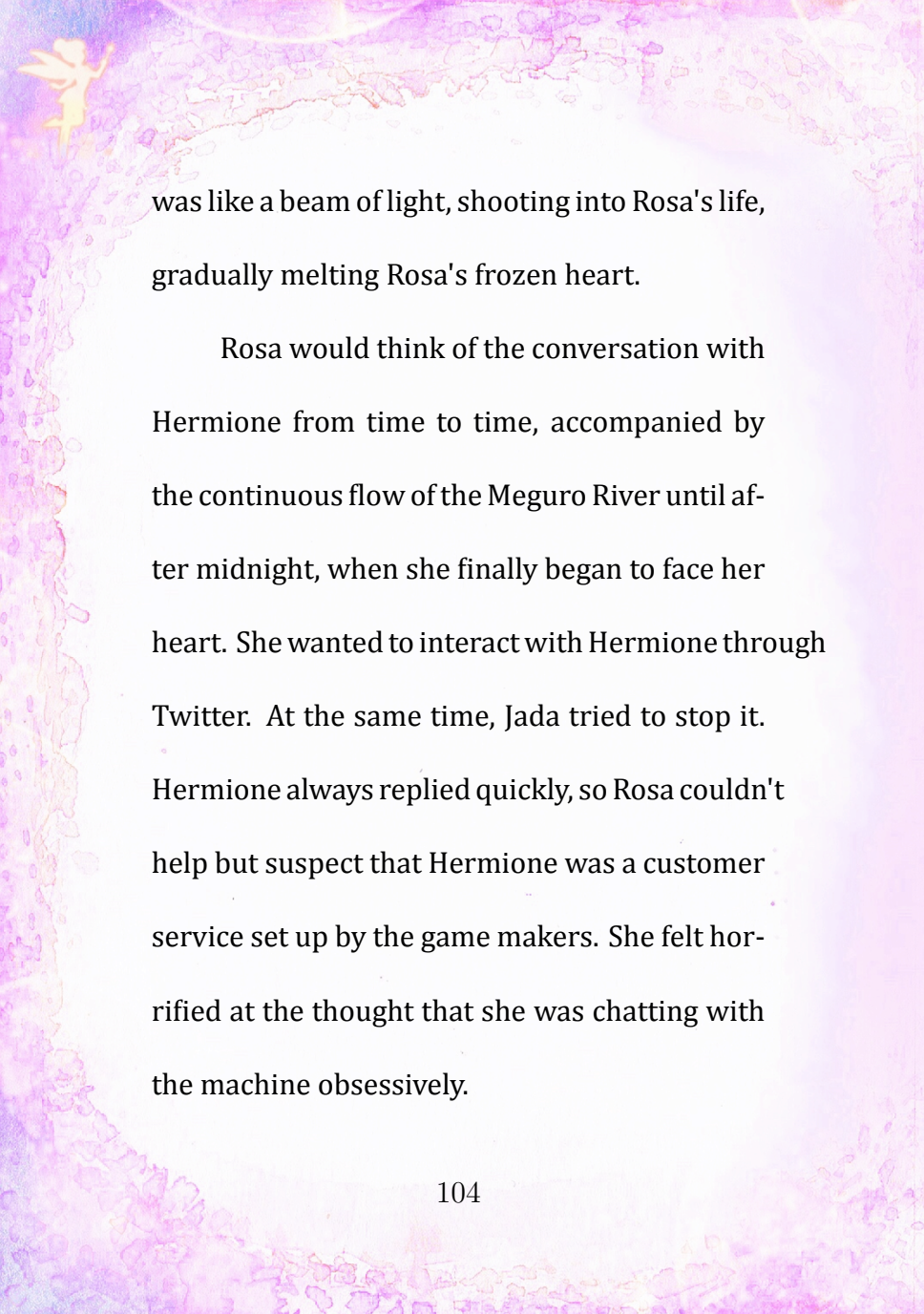
*Rosa doesn't care about looking in the crowd,
but only to find interesting souls.*

The identities of netizens put an unknown veil on each other, making all this more splendid. Rosa was enjoying the stolen pleasure while hiding it from everyone around her.

Even Rosa did not notice that Hermione had been traveling through the forest outside the Secret Rift with the crisp birdsong and was slowly approaching Rosa's heart.

Rosa looked forward to coming home from school every day to chat with Hermione. Hermione





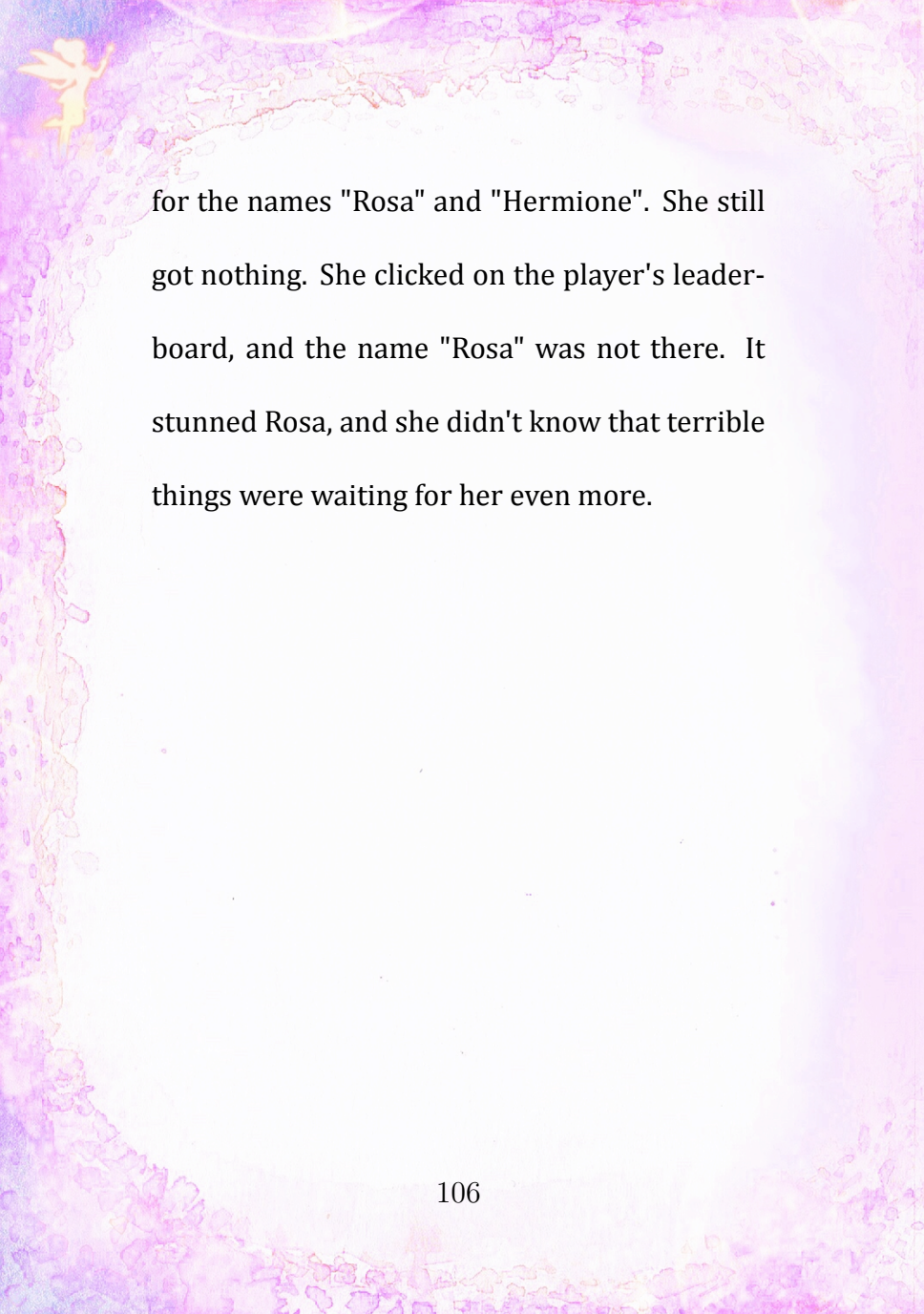
was like a beam of light, shooting into Rosa's life, gradually melting Rosa's frozen heart.

Rosa would think of the conversation with Hermione from time to time, accompanied by the continuous flow of the Meguro River until after midnight, when she finally began to face her heart. She wanted to interact with Hermione through Twitter. At the same time, Jada tried to stop it. Hermione always replied quickly, so Rosa couldn't help but suspect that Hermione was a customer service set up by the game makers. She felt horrified at the thought that she was chatting with the machine obsessively.

That weekend, Rosa finally couldn't take it anymore. The sky was gray, and large swaths of clouds covered the winter sun like a thick quilt. There was a mist of water on the window, indicating that something terrible would happen.

Rosa downloaded Flipping in Love on her phone and registered another account. After entering and searching for the name "Hermione," the system showed that there was no such person, and then she searched for her name. There is also no answer. Thinking that the phone and iPad might not be linked, she quickly took the iPad, switched to the guest account, and searched





for the names "Rosa" and "Hermione". She still got nothing. She clicked on the player's leaderboard, and the name "Rosa" was not there. It stunned Rosa, and she didn't know that terrible things were waiting for her even more.

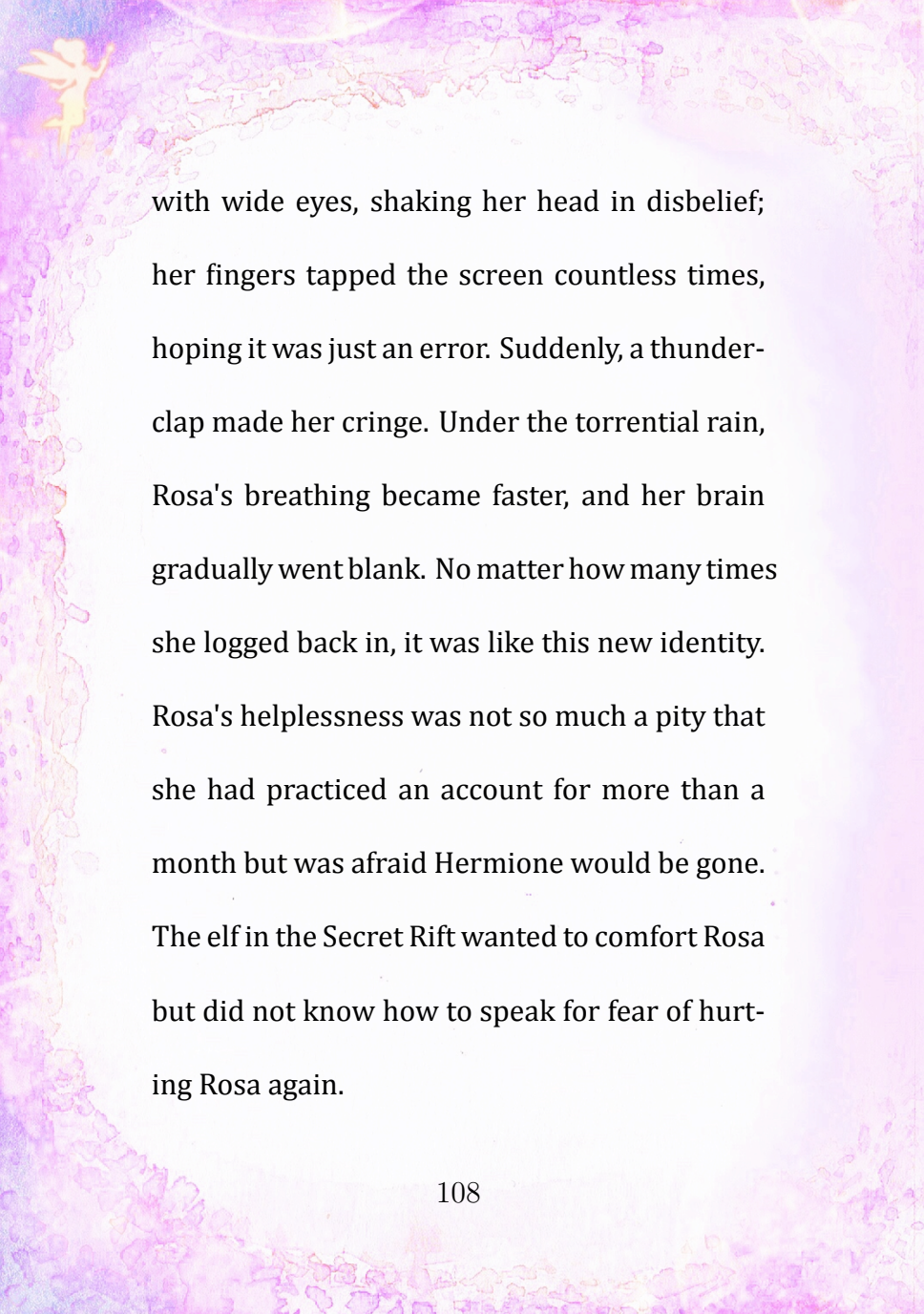
Chapter 4

A Misunderstanding

Rosa decided to switch back to her original account, then clicked the binding account, and after entering the account and password, it showed that the login was successful. However, she suddenly discovered that her game role information was from a guest account⁸, and no matter how hard she tried, she could not switch back to her original identity. She stared at the screen

⁸Guest Account: An account not bound to an identity





with wide eyes, shaking her head in disbelief; her fingers tapped the screen countless times, hoping it was just an error. Suddenly, a thunder-clap made her cringe. Under the torrential rain, Rosa's breathing became faster, and her brain gradually went blank. No matter how many times she logged back in, it was like this new identity. Rosa's helplessness was not so much a pity that she had practiced an account for more than a month but was afraid Hermione would be gone. The elf in the Secret Rift wanted to comfort Rosa but did not know how to speak for fear of hurting Rosa again.

"Rosa! It's shower time! Don't wait for the water to cool!" Rosa's mother's voice came from outside the door.

A trace of panic flashed on Rosa's face, and she locked the screen of her iPad and mobile phone with lightning speed. She agreed like a puppet and walked to the bathroom. She twisted the sprinkler, and numerous water droplets poured down and beat against her delicate skin. The memory with Hermione was like spring wind that turned clouds into rain, moistening the bottom of her eyes. The wind and rain outside the window were bleak, and there was another boom-





ing sound, and Rosa huddled in the corner in panic.

She hugged her body tightly.

Rosa mumbled, “I wish I had gone on Twitter earlier, so I wouldn't lose...”

She couldn't let go of the fact that Hermione was gone. Accompanied by the sound of the rushing rain, her nose was running, and the water washed down her cheeks, and it was not clear whether it was water or tears. The bright yellow heated light above her head illuminated her whole body, giving her nowhere to escape.

She wished it was just a nightmare.

Thunderstorms always come and go quickly.

The biting and frigid wind blew away the dark clouds, and the rain gradually decreased. Rosa leaned back in the rocking chair, staring out at the small puddle outside. Then, in desperation, she accidentally clicked the "click to change service area" button and just changed it back. After entering, she clicked on the friend list for the first time. Fortunately, Hermione's name appeared immediately. Her furrowed brows gradually loosened, and she let out a sigh of relief. The conversation didn't go away as she clicked on the chat window, but Rosa was still scared. It was a long time before we knew that was just a mistake.





... **THERE IS ONE ACCIDENT** ...

*At that point,
I also suspected that the other players
Rosa saw in the game were all avatars.
Looking back now,
I think it was as ridiculous as a monkey in a zoo.*

Chapter 5

Renewal, Then Thriving

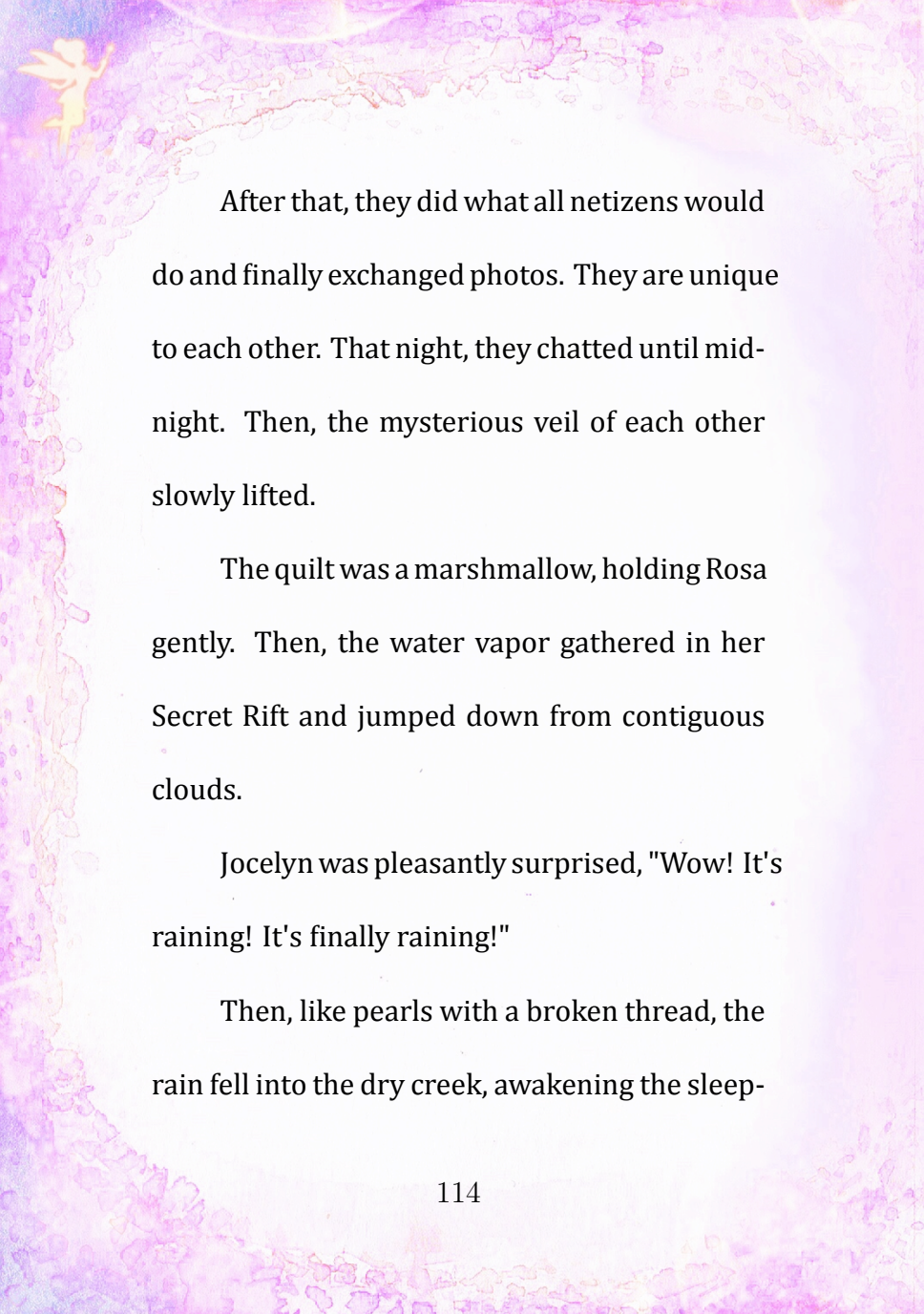
After the accident, Rosa decided to take further safeguards, exchanging Tweets.

They started chatting with Hermione's sentence, "I'm not an AI," and then later, "Okay... hello, my new netizen."

Rosa finally felt at ease, "We won't be caught up in the game anymore."

"Yeah... it's like a dream."





After that, they did what all netizens would do and finally exchanged photos. They are unique to each other. That night, they chatted until midnight. Then, the mysterious veil of each other slowly lifted.

The quilt was a marshmallow, holding Rosa gently. Then, the water vapor gathered in her Secret Rift and jumped down from contiguous clouds.

Jocelyn was pleasantly surprised, "Wow! It's raining! It's finally raining!"

Then, like pearls with a broken thread, the rain fell into the dry creek, awakening the sleep-

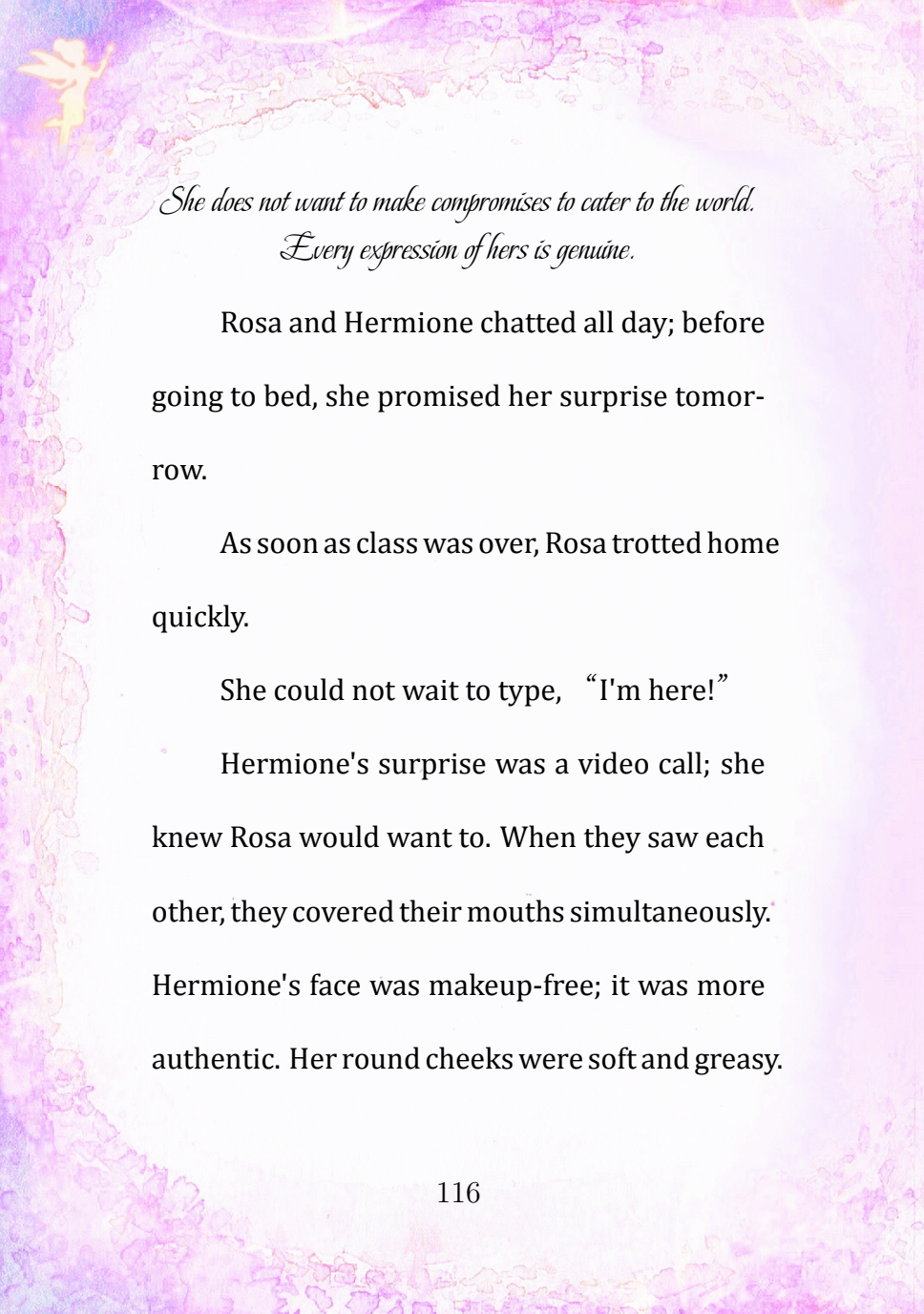
ing ground.

The following day, the rain stopped in the Secret Rift. The clouds were a brilliant white, and the sun softened like a quilt with a filter. Raindrops slid down the branches drop by drop, dancing with the fragrance of the earth in the wet mud, moisturizing the branches dried by the scorching sun and making new buds on the banks of the creek, covering the hills with a green blanket. Even more incredible as it had only been a week since the new friend's request to Rosa.

... ***I SUDDENLY REALIZED*** ...

It is not that Rosa does not love to laugh.





*She does not want to make compromises to cater to the world.
Every expression of hers is genuine.*

Rosa and Hermione chatted all day; before going to bed, she promised her surprise tomorrow.

As soon as class was over, Rosa trotted home quickly.

She could not wait to type, “I’m here!”

Hermione's surprise was a video call; she knew Rosa would want to. When they saw each other, they covered their mouths simultaneously. Hermione's face was makeup-free; it was more authentic. Her round cheeks were soft and greasy.

Her eyes were as bright as stars. Her face showed both naivety and a child-like expression.

Since Hermione stepped into Rosa's Secret Rift, the Secret Rift was flourishing again: the waterfall rushed down through the steep rock; at first glance, it was a stream of thousands of silver yarns. When the waterfall poured into the pool, small waves flew in the midair, filling the air and turning into a water mist. The roses by the brook were blooming, and the fragrance was overflowing, attracting butterflies and bees to dance. On the stone cliff in the distance, a peach tree thrived. Clusters of beautiful and pure petals



fluttered in the wind. The sky was an inadvertently overturned paint bottle, smudged and shaded with strands of color, as beautiful as Monet's paintings.



A sample of Rosa's Secret Rift

Rosa was wearing a long white velvet dress sitting on a stone pier by the creek, her skirt casually scattered on the lawn. The breeze touching their cheeks looked very comfortable, and this was their adolescent life.





Epilogue

The Future Is Promising

After that, Rosa and Hermione were on the phone several hours a day. One day the two chatted about Irene. She was a player in the game and belonged to another team.

"You have to stay away from her; she's domineering!" Hermione said meaningfully.

As soon as the words fell, Rosa saw that Irene took the initiative to PK her. Rosa has no

choice but to turn to Hermione.

"Don't worry. If Irene dares to mess around, I'll help you." Hermione's words fell warmly on her heart.

Rosa affirmed that it was difficult to get along with Irene. However, that's another story.





... **I ALSO CONSIDER IT NOW** ...

*In this boundless universe,
how tiny human beings are.*

*A little sincerity is million invaluable.
Even if it is as flowering as splendid fireworks,
and it quietly dissipates,
the glow is still worth remembering.*