



Dean Koontz does Second Life Bantam Dell event brings out the best in book junkies

by Pollywog Gardenvale

SHEEP ISLAND — Master of suspense and New York Times bestselling author, Dean Koontz broke new ground as the first to be subjected to Bantam Dell's "book junkie" avatars and virtual book tour, and come out whole.

The event was the first stop in a whirlwind itinerary of popular SL venues that included The Elbow Room, The Shelter, The Boiled Shrimp, Dusty's, Laguna Beach Club, Crayon, Hollywood Bowl, Sundance Channel and Pontiac Garage. The tour was orchestrated with the help of The Electric Sheep Company (the Second Life startup that recently made news with the addition of CBS to the fold).

Beatrice Scintilla of Bantam Dell announced that this was their first in-world event and that Koontz would read an excerpt from his upcoming novel, *The Good Guy*, scheduled for release on May 29, 2007. Afterwards, there would be a live QA session.

It was clear that this was serious business, with big names and big companies spending big money.

By the time I arrived, there was standing room only and people were being asked to sit on the floor. As I looked around for a place to sit, someone IM'd a shout at me to "SIT DOWN!" so I quickly grabbed a sitting pose (which actually turned out to be a floating meditation) from my inventory. But at least I was out of the way. I felt lucky to have found a spot right up front, just a few steps from the feet of Dean Koontz.



Dean Koontz speaks to "book junkie" avatars at the Bantam Dell Book Shop in Second Life.

As he began to read, I found him to be a soft-spoken man, whose voice suggested just a hint of stage fright. I also learned that Dean Koontz once read thirty-four books in thirty days (which makes the time I spend in Second Life *pale* in comparison). And it was nice to find out that he too, enjoys a nice bottle of wine now and then. Here's a guy who spends most of his time writing, so I imagined that reading out loud to a crowd of avatars was probably not the way he would choose to spend his evening—not to mention all the handlers and fuss that go along with any book tour.

So just as I was thinking about what serious business this all seems to be, up comes Elf Hag Robin Roar to the stage, cozies up and sits down on Dean Koontz' shoulder. "Man! That woman's got guts!" I thought to myself. Of course, I wouldn't ever do such a thing, no matter how much I like his writing. But he just ignored her and kept on reading.

Then up comes a man who starts walking back and forth and hamming it up on the side of the stage. Then up comes another. "What is it with these book junkies?" I thought. Was this a revival or secret initiation, or maybe a new way to show author appreciation? They all seemed to be in on it, but at least they livened things up a bit.

Dean Koontz just kept on reading, but it made me wonder: Was it possible that underneath his mild-mannered exterior, that Dean Koontz was really an uninhibited crowd pleaser?

Or was he simply the unwitting pleaser of an uninhibited crowd?

Meanwhile, I was busy taking snapshots with my camera tool adjusted in the out-of-body "remote viewing" position. It was just about this time when I discovered my avatar was missing. Suddenly I received an urgent message from an Electric Sheep who shouted, "POLLYWOG GARDENVALE, GET OFF THE STAGE IMMEDIATELY OR YOU'LL BE EJECTED!!!!!"

To my horror, as I directed my camera toward the stage, there was my avatar shamelessly cavorting about Dean Koontz. Realizing that at any moment this Electric Sheep was going to press the Eject button, I quickly clicked Stand Up, scurried offstage, and sent out a profuse apology explaining that I really didn't mean to go barreling headlong into Dean Koontz' lap—or whatever it was that I did—and that it must be a bug. Then came laughter and echoes of "I didn't know what I was doing, either!" and more laughter.

By the end of the evening, Beatrice Scintilla asked, "So Dean, what do you think about Second Life?" To which he replied, "Well, except for the fairy standing on my head, it has been an interesting experience." ☘



Elf Hag Robin Roar sits on Dean Koontz at the Bantam Dell Book Shop.

Bantam Dell Book Shop
Sheep island (122, 31, 25)