

Endless 161

Chapter 161: Trial Of Defense

As a Tanker Class, Alex was very curious what kind of trial he would face inside the portal.

The moment he regained his vision, he found himself on a wide open plain.

He saw several students fighting against monsters, holding shields in their arms.

Clearly, these teenagers had chosen professions that used shields and were being tested for their ability to block their opponents' attacks.

Alex and Dim Dim observed the battle for a while.

A burly student, nearly two meters in height, was currently battling a Troll.

Trolls were monsters whose ranks could range anywhere between Rank 3 and Rank 8.

They were monsters that no beginners would want to face. Not only were they physically strong, they also had strong regeneration abilities.

In fact, there was a saying that you couldn't kill a Troll unless you were proficient in using fire or a strong acid.

"That's one sturdy guy," Alex muttered. "Is he really a teenager?"

The sound of the wooden club hitting a shield spread through the surroundings like the beats of a war drum.

Two Professors watched the young man, nodding their heads in appreciation of his ability to take hits from a strong opponent.

“Okay, that’s enough, Garran,” the Combat Professor shouted. “I’ll award you 3,500 Points.”

Garran backed away from the Troll, who faded out of existence with the wave of the Professor’s hand.

“Professor, why did I only get 3,500 points?” Garran complained. “I endured the hits of the Troll without a problem.”

“You’re right,” the Combat Professor agreed. “However, that’s all you did. You just took hits and didn’t even bother to try to defeat the Troll. I am already being generous by giving you 3,500 points only because you did block all of the Troll’s attacks without getting blown back.”

Garran frowned but decided to accept his score since the Professor had already given him an explanation.

Besides, the middle-aged Combat Professor with gray hair and gray eyes was none other than Darius Gray, a very famous knight in the Kingdom of Avalon.

Many knights wished to become just like him. Garran certainly wasn’t arrogant enough to challenge the words of such an accomplished fighter.

However, he didn’t leave the Trial of Defense.

He had already finished taking three trials, and stayed to see if there were any First Years who were better than him.

Garran believed that he would be the top scorer of the Trial of Defense this year, which was an honor in itself.

Meanwhile, Professor Darius finally noticed Alex.

He tried to give the young man a smile of acknowledgement, but the scar on his left cheek affected his ability to emote. The battle-tested Professor then asked Alex what kind of trial he would like to challenge.

“Can I see what kind of trials are available?” Alex inquired.

“Sure,” Darius replied before snapping his fingers.

A projection appeared in front of Alex, listing the names of several monsters.

“Just choose a monster and indicate how many of them you want to fight,” Garran, who felt like he needed to show that he was superior to other students, commented.

“Take note—you can only take this trial once. If you get defeated by your opponent, you get zero points. So don’t bite off more than you can chew, okay? Choose your opponent wisely.”

Alex nodded. “Thank you for the reminder.”

The young man then shifted his attention to the list of monsters while rubbing his chin.

Clearly, he wanted to get a high score in order to get to the class he wanted.

He had only gotten 1,100 points from the Trial of Alchemy.

As for the Trial of Music, he hadn’t heard his score before being sent out of the concert hall.

But judging from the reaction of Professor Arienna, the other teachers, as well as the students, he was certain that he had gotten a perfect score due to his outstanding talent.

Three minutes later, Alex finally made his decision.

With a few clicks, he chose the monster he wanted to face and added the number of opponents. With that done, he went toward an empty spot on the plain to take the trial.

Garran, some of the other students who had also finished their trial, and Professor Darius looked at the young man who had summoned a black shield on his left hand.

However, when he summoned another shield on his right hand, nearly all of them smirked, with some even laughing out loud.

“Dual Shielding!” Garran chuckled. “He is indeed a tanker! Hahaha!”

Professor Darius smiled faintly. This wasn’t the first time he saw someone attempt the trial with two shields.

Since this was the Trial of Defense, they were being tested on how they would be able to defend against attacks from their opponents.

However, the students’ laughter ended when they saw the monsters that Alex had challenged.

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< Killer Quill >

“Some Adventurers have claimed that it’s just a demonic porcupine. Their paralyzed corpses say otherwise.”

Monster Rank: Rank 2 Monster

Monster Grade: Common

Attribute: Poison / Demonic

Species: Venom Spike Porcupine

Type: Ambush Striker

Health: 880 / 880

Attack: 90 – 130

Active Skills: Quill Burst, Needle Lunge.

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Garran's mouth opened wide in shock, not because Alex was fighting a Rank 2 Killer Quill, but because he was fighting against a hundred of them!

A countdown timer above Alex's head informed him that the battle was about to start.

Five...

Four...

Three..

Two...

One!

As soon as the countdown ended, the Killer Quills unleashed a spray of sharp quills laced with paralyzing venom at the young man.

Garran and the other students couldn't help but shudder, knowing that even if only a single quill landed on the young man, he would be finished!

But things didn't turn out the way they imagined.

As soon as the countdown ended, Alex raised Svalinn in front of him and charged forward.

"Shield Charge!"

The sound of quills pelting his shield reached Alex's ears, but he didn't mind it one bit.

Most of the quills missed their target because Alex had moved away from his spot.

When his shield rammed the Rank 2 Monster in front of him, Alex used one of the skills that his master, Cairo, had imparted to him.

"Demon Slaying Art Second Form..." Alex shouted, and Everguard shone in a golden light.

"Grand Cross!"

The young man slammed his shield on the ground, and a magic circle expanded around him.

A moment later, radiant light surged forth, dealing holy damage to the demonic porcupines, who all screamed in pain as the element they hated the most burned their bodies.

The remaining Killer Quills ignored the screams of their comrades and unleashed another barrage in Alex's direction.

“Shield [EX]!”

“Enchant Holy!”

< Multicast [EX] activated! >

Four magical shields imbued with the holy element appeared around Alex, protecting the blind spots his two shields couldn't cover.

The magical shields resisted the bombardment, and as soon as the initial threat was over, Alex once again took the initiative to attack.

“Shield Throw!” Alex roared, and the four magical shields flew in different directions, slamming against the Killer Quills.

The sight of this shocked the people who were watching the battle.

“W-What the hell...” Garran, who initially thought that he was the best Defender among the First Years, looked at the battle in astonishment.

This was the first time Alex was using a fighting style inspired by his Shield Savant Job Class.

Although it was his first try, Professor Darius and the other students looked at him in awe as if he was some kind of Shield Master who could deftly throw shields left and right on the battlefield.

Chapter 162: The Top Ranker Of The Trial Of Defense

Garran was born into a noble family known for their outstanding knights as descendants.

He had been trained in combat since young. Enrolling in Frieden Academy had always been one of his goals, which he recently achieved.

When interacting with his peers and the Professors, he deliberately watched his image, wanting to create a good impression. He believed that doing so would show the prestige of his family.

However, when he went to the Trial of Swords and Trial of Fists, he saw teenagers who were more outstanding than him.

For this reason, he chose the Trial of Defense as his last trial.

This was the trial he was most confident in, and he showed his proficiency by fighting against a Troll, which was one of the strongest monsters there was.

He was quite happy after receiving 3,500 Points.

Why? Because the maximum points that could be earned from each trial were 5,000.

His points were enough to land him in Class C, which he felt was satisfactory.

Garran didn't want to compete with the prodigies and geniuses of the current generation. He was fine with being slightly above average.

Not to mention, no one had performed better than him in the Trial of Defense, so he felt confident about making a mark in the history of the academy.

All the top achievers in each trial would be displayed in a Ranking, and so far, his name was at the very top.

He believed that no one would be able to best his score.

That was until Alex appeared in the Trial of Defense.

"W-What the hell?!" Garran gasped in shock.

Even the other students couldn't keep their eyes off Alex because of the unique way he used his shields. His way of fighting made them realize that they had never properly thought about the full potential of shields.

"Shield Boomerang!" Alex roared, and his four magical shields imbued with the holy element flew toward four of the closest Killer Quills. Upon impact, the monsters screeched in pain.

Even the Combat Professor, Darius, couldn't help but give the young man a thumbs-up in his heart. This was the exact kind of performance he expected to see from a student.

"Watch out!" one of the students yelled as the Killer Quills unleashed another deadly spray of quills at the young man, who had just bashed a monster to death.

"Shield Charge!" Alex shouted. Soon, he transformed into a golden comet that streaked across the battlefield and clashed against the monster farthest from him.

Not only did he evade the attacks of dozens of monsters, but he was also able to instantly close the gap between him and a group of six Killer Quills, which he planned to eliminate.

"Grand Cross!"

The area of Alex's attack skill shone in splendor, dealing serious damage against the Killer Quills.

He temporarily returned Svalinn to his storage ring and summoned his sword to deliver the final blow against the monsters that were already near death.

A few seconds later, six more Rank 2 Monsters died, bringing his kill count to forty.

In the eyes of the students, Alex was one-sidedly slaughtering the monsters.

Little did they know, the young man had nearly depleted his Stamina and Mana after using his skills consecutively.

The young man crouched down and hid his body behind Everguard.

The sound of quills pelting his shield was a constant reminder that despite his strong performance so far, the battle wasn't over yet.

To everyone's surprise, Alex took out a roasted pork bun from his storage ring and began to eat it.

Using potions and pills to heal injuries or replenish mana during the trials was technically permitted. However, the students avoided doing so since they believed the Professors would think badly of them if they did.

Why?

Because doing this was almost equivalent to cheating, and the First Years thought their points might even get deducted if they resorted to healing potions and pills.

Alex was aware of this, but since he was eating a pork bun—which was clearly neither a potion nor a pill—he assumed that he would not get penalized.

And he was right.

Although everyone looked at him weirdly, no one cried foul.

How could they possibly criticise Alex when he was fighting against a hundred monsters, something none of them dared to do? Complaining about his odd but harmless action would only make them appear bitter and petty.

After hearing the notification that indicated that the food buff had taken effect, Alex summoned Svalinn once more and used his two shields to protect his body.

Taking a deep breath, he waited for another quill spray before he activated his Shield Charge.

As he was low on stamina, he simply bashed the Killer Quills with his two shields, which were enchanted with the holy element.

The moment he recovered enough mana and stamina to unleash his Grand Cross and Shield Charge, he would once again go on a full offensive, steadily decreasing the number of his opponents.

The battle lasted for nearly forty minutes before Alex killed the last Killer Quill.

“Finally,” Alex muttered as he fell on one knee and used his sword to support his body.

He was panting for breath, and sweat streamed down his face.

However, he was quite satisfied with his performance. For a brief moment, he remembered what it felt like to be a Shield Savant.

Although what he did was a poor imitation of that Job Class’ overwhelming offensive abilities, he was still happy because his current skill set was enough to handle dozens of enemies that were the same rank as him.

“Dim Dim!” Dim Dim landed on top of Alex’s head and handed him a towel to wipe his sweat.

“Thanks, Dim Dim,” Alex replied.

It took him a few minutes to regain his breath and stand up.

“Well done, young man,” Darius approached Alex with a smile. “Your name is Alex Stratos, right? I will award you 5,000 Points for this trial. Congratulations, you have surpassed my expectations.”

The combat professor chuckled as he patted the young man's shoulder.

"You have attained the highest Rank in the Trial of Defense, and I doubt anyone can surpass what you have done," Darius stated. "The top 3 rankers in each trial will receive an additional 500 points. Overall, you have gained 5,500 points here in the Trial of Defense."

Alex did a fist pump because he now had a solid shot of getting into Class B.

Along with the 1,100 points he had gotten from the Trial of Alchemy, he had a total of at least 6,600 points.

In addition, he had also passed the Trial of Music with flying colors, or so he believed.

Although he still didn't know exactly how many points he had gotten from that particular trial, he reckoned that Professor Arienna had probably given him around 5,000 points. This meant that he would miss Class A's cut-off score by a few hundred points.

'Just as planned.' Alex flipped his hair because everything was falling into place.

After thanking Professor Darius, Alex left the Trial of Defense with a spring in his steps.

He planned to return to the Trial of Music to ask Professor Arienna for his score so that he could officially enter Class B.

At least, that was what he thought.

However, when he entered the Trial of Music, he got something else instead of the points he wanted.

What was it?

It was a surprise that made Alex's name spread far and wide among both the students and the staff.

Chapter 163: The Bonafide Siscon Of Frieden Academy

“Professor, there must be a mistake,” Alex said with a look of utter disbelief. “How is it possible that I got zero points in the Trial of Music when my singing was the bomb!”

“Well, you’re not wrong because you did bomb your singing,” Professor Arienna replied, struggling to keep a straight face. “Alex, everyone has different strengths and weaknesses. It just so happens that singing is not one of your talents, and that is alright.”

“Huh?” Alex blinked once, then twice, before shaking his head as if he could negate the Music Professor’s words by doing that.

Alex Stratos? No talent in singing? Inconceivable!

“Professor, I don’t want to brag, but my friends called me Karaoke King in the past,” Alex stated with a hint of pride. “I don’t know if you’re just pranking me, but if you are, I’m going to ask the Headmaster to be the judge. I will showcase my talents once again to prove that this score does not reflect my ability accurately.”

Professor Arienna’s teaching assistant shuddered uncontrollably after hearing Alex’s words. All color drained from her face, and she stared at Alex like he was some kind of monster.

The corner of Professor Arienna’s lips twitched.

She didn’t know why Alex was so confident that things would go his way. If he really involved the Headmaster in this matter... Why, the Paragon of Space might just send this foolish singer straight into outer space after hearing him sing a single line!

“A-Alex, please calm down, okay?” Professor Arienna stuttered. “You’re still young. You shouldn’t throw away your life just like that.”

Alex looked at the beautiful professor as if he were a soldier who was prepared to go to war.

“Professor, I just want a fair score for my efforts,” Alex replied. “Is that too much to ask? Dim Dim, what do you think?”

The Dim Sum God, who was several meters away, started tapping on its tambourine with great focus as it pretended that it could not hear the young man’s words.

The teaching assistant tugged on the Professor’s sleeve and asked to discuss something in private.

“Professor, I’m afraid that he will really submit an appeal to the Headmaster and ask for a re-evaluation. While other trials do give zero points, the Trial of Music usually doesn’t go that far. I’m afraid that this matter might spiral out of control if we don’t deal with it right now.”

Professor Arienna pinched the bridge of her nose because she understood that her assistant was right.

However, she hesitated. Giving Alex a score for his horrendous singing simply went against her principles.

Seeing Professor Arienna’s pained expression, the teaching assistant bit her lip and racked her brain for a solution.

“How about we just give Alex Dim Dim’s score?” the teaching assistant proposed. “The little one sang very well during the trial.”

“But Dim Dim is not a student of the academy,” Professor Arienna argued. “We can’t make exceptions like this.”

“Professor, you and I both know what will happen if the Headmaster really comes here to settle this dispute,” the teaching assistant pointed out. “I’m afraid Alex might get banished to the shadow realm the moment the Headmaster hears his singing.”

“Then... how many points should we give him?” Professor Arienna decided to compromise.

The two discussed for a few minutes before coming to a conclusion.

“Alex, we are giving you 2,000 points,” Professor Arienna said through gritted teeth, “on one condition.”

“What is it?”

“Promise me that you will not join the Music Class during your time here at the academy.”

Alex rubbed his chin before agreeing. “I understand, Professor. Since you no longer have anything to teach me, you believe that Music Class will be a waste of my time, right?”

“Y-Yeah,” Professor Arienna replied. “I have nothing more to teach you.”

Alex nodded in understanding before looking at the collective points he gathered for the three trials.

‘8,600 points,’ Alex mused. ‘I guess Class C it is.’

A moment later, Alex found himself in the plaza, where six pillars stood.

Each pillar represented a class from Class F to Class A.

Just as he expected, his name shone faintly on the pillar that represented Class C.

Suddenly, he felt someone lightly tap his shoulder, making him turn around.

Alex’s eyes widened. He had seen this lady before, but his breath was still taken away by her beauty.

“I’m sorry about what happened earlier,” Astrea said in an apologetic tone. “I should have been more careful. My mistake might have caused you to score lower than you deserved.”

Dim Dim blinked before pulling on Alex's ear, snapping him out of his daze.

"I-It's not a big deal," Alex replied. "I got into the class that I wanted."

"Really?" Astrea looked genuinely relieved after hearing Alex's answer.

"Really."

"That's good, then. I hope that you will have an enjoyable time at the academy."

The young lady then walked away, relieved that she hadn't made a student suffer due to her clumsiness.

While Alex watched the young lady leave, he felt a wave of killing intent surge towards him from his left. He shuddered.

"What are you looking at, huh? You punk?!" a handsome Second Year with short purple hair and purple eyes glared at Alex. "Why did you make my sister apologize to you? Are you courting death?!"

Alex immediately recognized the noisy Second Year because he was none other than Astrea's older brother, Cassian Nocturne.

'I forgot that this guy is a bona fide siscon,' Alex thought, feeling the pressure on Cassian's gaze.

"What's wrong, punk?" Cassian cracked his knuckles. "You want to get beaten up by me, huh?!"

"Senior, please calm down," Alex replied. "Earlier during the trials, your sister bumped into me and pushed me into a portal by accident. She came to apologize for her mistake."

“What are you talking about, punk?!” Cassian grabbed Alex’s collar. “It is your fortune that my sister even bumped into you. I should be the one asking you for an apology instead.”

‘Damn, this siscon really is a pain in the ass!’ Alex already knew that there was no use talking to Cassian because he was deaf to reason for all matters concerning his sister.

In the end, Alex used his secret weapon in order to handle the situation.

“Help! This senior is bullying meeeeeee!” Alex shouted. “Someone help! I’m getting bullied!”

Cassian snapped out of his death glare and immediately noticed that several students were looking in their direction.

Even some Professors were paying attention to him to make sure he wasn’t bullying anyone.

“This isn’t over!” Cassian clicked his tongue before walking away.

Alex and Dim Dim looked at the siscon that made Astrea’s romance route a living hell.

The chance of ending up as Astrea’s partner in the game was only one percent because, unless you had cleared several character routes, Cassian would do everything in his power to kill anyone who was trying to get close to his sister.

‘Maybe it was a good thing that I didn’t end up in Class B.’ Alex sighed internally. ‘That guy is a red flag.’

Just as the young man was about to leave, another person tapped his shoulder.

“You said that you planned to go to Class B,” Lavinia said with a pout.

She had done her absolute best to get to Class B so they could be classmates.

But after checking the list of students in Class B, Lavinia realized Alex's name wasn't on it.

"There was an accident, so I missed out on Class B by a few points," Alex explained. "I only managed to go to Class C."

The young man recounted what had happened earlier. Lavinia couldn't help but sigh after hearing his story.

"I see, it was really an accident then," the Catkin said sadly.

"Don't worry! Although we are in different classes, there are some interclass activities and lectures," Alex stated. "We can still attend the same classes if our schedules permit."

Ramza and Cairo had asked Alex to look after Lavinia in the academy.

Since the Clawford Tribe had treated him well, he had promised to do his best to help her in her studies, making sure that she didn't get a failing grade.

Suddenly, a loud laugh reached the ears of the two teenagers. They turned to the source of the laughter and saw Chuck walking towards them.

"We are in the same class, Alex!" Chuck exclaimed happily. "Not only are we roommates, we are also classmates. This means that fate is looking after the two of us!"

"Charles is also in Class C, you know?" Alex pointed out.

"The more the merrier." Chuck chuckled. "Now, let's grab something to eat and celebrate!"

Chuck didn't even wait for Alex's reply as he dragged the young man to the cafeteria.

Lavinia glanced at the Class C Pillar and sighed a second time before following Alex and Chuck, who seemed to be very happy after finding out that his best friend was in the same class as him.

Chapter 164: First Day Of Class [Part 1]

“Welcome to Class C. My name is Professor Arabella, and I am your class advisor. I’m also a history teacher, so if you have any questions related to history, feel free to ask me.”

Professor Arabella stood tall with a graceful, almost regal posture. Her presence was both gentle and magnetic.

Long waves of chestnut hair cascaded down her back, tied loosely with an ivory ribbon that matched her pleated blouse. Her only ornamentation was an old brooch that she pinned just below the centre of her collar.

Her eyes were a striking shade of storm-grey, intelligent and contemplative, as if they’re always reading between the lines of time.

Alex struggled to tell how old she was. Her skin was as smooth and pale as porcelain and offset by a soft rosy flush in her cheeks and lips, but the twinkle behind her gold-rimmed spectacles hinted at knowledge that could only be gained from years and years of studying mysterious texts uncovered from ancient ruins.

One of the students wolf-whistled as he looked at their beautiful professor. Everyone immediately turned to see who had the audacity to be so crass before such a dignified scholar of history.

“I-I’m sorry,” the teenage boy apologized hastily. For a moment, he had completely forgotten that he was currently in Frieden Academy, not the busy markets of Harmonia.

“Since this is our first day in class, I will let this slide, Mr. Philip,” Professor Arabella said. “But please, for your own safety, don’t try this with the other Professors, okay? They’re not as understanding as me.”

“Yes, Professor!” Philip answered firmly. “It will not happen again!”

“Good.” Professor Arabella’s lips curved with amusement. “Now, since we are still strangers to each other, how about we use this opportunity to introduce ourselves to the class?”

“Let’s start with the person at the back of the class. Can you please introduce yourself and, if possible, share your favorite quote as well?”

“Yes, My Lady!” Chuck stood up, excited to talk about himself. “My name is Chuck No Rizz. Seventeen years old. I am a Fire Mage, and I plan to have three girlfriends! My favorite quote is ‘Chase fire, chase women, chase glory!’”

The teenage boy then flashed a devilish smile before shooting finger guns at the front row. He sat down, but not before remembering to wink at the ladies who were looking at him out of politeness and curiosity.

Awkward silence descended upon the class, only broken by the sound of chair legs dragging across the floor as Alex and Dim Dim moved a little farther from Chuck and pretended not to know him.

Professor Arabella blinked, doing her best to prevent her smile of warm encouragement from faltering.

“I see,” Professor Arabelle said lightly. “A man of ambition... and flare. Next please!”

The class chuckled, noticing that the Professor clearly did her best to think of a positive thing to say about Chuck’s declaration.

“My name is Alex Stratos,” Alex said with a smile. “I’ll turn eighteen in three months. I specialize in using the shield. This is my friend, Dim Dim, and I hope to get along well with everyone. My favorite quote is... Fight for your dreams, and your dreams will fight for you.”

Professor Arabella appreciated Alex’s quiet confidence, which she could see from the way he spoke.

Dim Dim, perched on his head, smiled cutely at the students and waved its little arm, earning a few “awwws” from the girls and smirks from the boys.

“Well spoken, Mr. Stratos. And welcome, Dim Dim,” Professor Arabella praised. “I hope that both of you will enjoy your stay here in the academy.”

“I wish for that as well, Professor,” Alex replied.

“Dim Dim~” Dim Dim smiled.

One by one, Alex’s other classmates introduced themselves. Eventually, it was the turn of a dwarf seated in the front row.

Standing not more than five feet tall, she spoke confidently and her lively voice spread inside.

“My name is Fran Terra. I just turned eighteen years old a week ago,” Fran said. “As you can see, I’m a dwarf. I might look like a little kid, but I’m older than most of you here in the class.

“I take care of the small farm in the academy as well as its animals. If you are interested in milk and cheese, you can buy it from me for a cheap price.”

Alex watched the young lady sit down, feeling a little bit unsettled because she had said the same words in her introduction in the game.

Of course, there was nothing wrong with that.

It was just that Alex had hoped that things would be a little different now that he was in the same class as her.

Although she was not one of the three main heroines of ELO, she was very popular among the player base, just like Astrea.

Some people refer to her romance route as the “Farmville Route” because she was the academy’s one and only farmer.

Her skin was surprisingly pale and smooth for someone who worked in the fields and tended animals. It had a healthy, radiant glow. Her pink hair was kept practically short and her eyes, which were also pink, sparkled cheerfully.

Although she was small, her body contained a herculean strength that was capable of knocking out Renard with a single punch.

In truth, even Alex wasn't confident that he could fight Fran in a serious battle. Although she was young, Fran was nearly a Rank 4 Dwarven Berserker.

She was a Prodigy the academy was nurturing, which was why the staff had allowed her to establish a farm of her own on the campus.

"Chuck, as your friend, let me give you one piece of advice," Alex whispered in his roommate's ear. "Don't cross Fran no matter what. You might not survive to piss her off a second time."

"You don't need to tell me that," Chuck replied in a serious tone. "That girl... she's strong."

He might be a troublemaker, but he was clever enough to pick his battles.

Chuck's instincts were telling him that if he messed with Fran, he might find himself crippled for months on end.

When all the students had introduced themselves, Professor Arabella decided to start a basic lecture.

"Let's first talk about the history of Frieden Academy," Professor Arabella said. "As you may already know, this academy was founded by none other than the Paragon of Space, Rowan Vademont."

The Professor then lightly tapped on the board, creating a projection of their Headmaster.

'Over four centuries ago, during the aftermath of the Rift Wars, Rowan Vademont sought to create a sanctuary,' Professor Arabella explained. "A sanctuary where knowledge, not conquest, would shape

the next generation. Thus, Frieden Academy was born. A neutral ground in a divided world, and a bastion for all who seek to master their talents.”

Professor Arabella’s gaze swept across the class. “This place is not only a school, but a promise. The word ‘Frieden’ means peace in the old tongue. But don’t let the name fool you. The trials here are... rigorous.

“The Headmaster believes that peace is not something handed to you. It must be earned, sharpened, and guarded. The only way for peace to thrive is to have the strength to protect it. That is the reason why Frieden Academy exists.”

A playful smile appeared on Professor Arabella’s face.

“I know that some of you are not interested in a History Class,” Professor Arabella stated. “It’s very understandable because what we discuss has already happened in the past. You might find yourself asking, ‘What is history, and why should we care?’”

The Professor then waved her hand, as if challenging the class to answer her question.

“The one who can give me a good answer to the question ‘What is history and why should we care?’ will receive five hundred Academy Points from me.” Professor Arabella’s smile widened. “As you may or may not know, the currency we use in this academy is Academy Points.

“Gold is only useful outside the walls of this learning institution. Inside, Academy Points is your only option. I’m looking forward to see who among you will be able to give me an answer worthy of the academy points I am offering right now.”

As soon as Professor Arabella announced her challenge, several hands shot up. Each of them wanted to be chosen to answer, hoping to get the promised prize.

“Mr. Rizz, you go first,” Professor Arabelle pointed at Chuck, who was waving his hand frantically.

Chuck stood, smiling confidently, and coughed lightly before giving his answer.

Alex and Dim Dim looked at their friend warily. Chuck's expression all but stated that he had this question in the bag, but Alex and Dim Dim knew better than to be this optimistic.

Chapter 165: First Day Of Class [Part 2]

Everyone's gaze landed on Chuck, waiting for him to answer the Professor's question.

"History is... the story of epic people doing epic things," Chuck said as if he was some kind of refined scholar that knew about the secrets of the world.

"Like wars, betrayals, forbidden love between a princess and a rogue, and people punching dragons in the face. We care about history because it's full of juicy drama. Honestly, it's kind of inspiring.

"Like, if these people in the past could survive all that stuff, maybe I can also survive Professor Grelvok's Magical Combat Theory class."

The class chuckled. A few students clapped, mostly out of amusement.

Professor Arabella covered her mouth and giggled because she and Professor Grelvok were close friends.

Hearing one of her students mention her stubborn old friend elicited a ticklish feeling inside her chest.

"Thank you for that answer, Mr Rizz," Professor Arabella replied. "Although it's not the answer I am looking for, I'll award you with 50 Academy Points for making us laugh."

Chuck did a fist pump.

Even though he didn't get the 500 point rewards, getting 50 points during the first day of class was already an achievement.

One by one, the other students gave their answers.

Some were hoping that they would impress Professor Arabella enough to earn some points.

But the History Professor wasn't satisfied with their answers.

Alex, who thought that he should give it a try, finally raised his hand.

"Go on, Mr. Stratos." Professor Arabelle gestured for him to answer the question.

Alex stood up and attempted the question to the best of his abilities.

"History is the echo of choices," Alex said slowly. "The choices that shaped kingdoms, saved lives... or destroyed them. It's more than stories. It's the reminder that we're never the first to stand at crossroads. And if we don't learn from the footsteps before ours, we'll walk straight into the same traps."

Professor Arabella's eyes lingered on Alex for a beat longer than usual. Then, softly, she clapped her hands once.

"Well said, Mr. Stratos." Clearly, the History Professor was pleased with his response.

She planned to award the 500 points after everyone had given their answer. So far, Alex's answer was currently the top contender for her prize, but she still wanted to give the remaining students a chance to try.

"Anyone else who'd like to give their answer?" Professor Arabella asked, her eyes dancing with intrigue.

A moment later, a single hand shot up. Everyone looked at Fran, who had raised her hand for the first time since the History Professor asked her question.

"History is like soil," Fran began, which earned her a few sniggers from some of the boys who thought that she was just making things up.

However, despite being the shortest student in the class, Fran stood tall and continued her explanation with a determined look in her eyes.

“It’s where everything grows from. If the soil is poisoned... so are the crops. If it’s rich and cared for, good things can take root. We care about history because it feeds what comes next. Whether we’re growing food or people.”

A hush fell over the room. Everyone was enraptured by Fran’s words. Even those who had thought her silly were beginning to listen intently to her explanation.

“And sometimes... it takes a long time for the trees to bear fruit. But it still matters. Even if no one thanks the soil.”

The smirks had vanished, but Fran wasn’t done just yet.

“That is what history is. The result of what people have planted and grown over the years. Choices, actions, even mistakes. They all take root. And eventually, they bloom into the world we live in today. Good or bad.”

She drew in a small breath and gently clasped her hands together.

“Some seeds were planted in pain. Some in hope. Some people planted trees knowing they’d never sit in the shade. But we do. We sit there now. That’s why we remember. Because we’re not just simply living our lives. Everything we have now, we inherited from History.”

Fran wasn’t trying to impress anyone.

Her words were simple but true. Like tilled earth after a storm. Like the quiet strength of someone who knew the value of patience.

Professor Arabella smiled softly. When she finally spoke, her voice was gentle.

“Thank you, Miss Terra. That... was beautifully said.” Professor Arabella almost teared up because Fran’s answer had moved her.

At that moment, someone started to clap, prompting everyone to gaze in the direction of the handsome young man with short silver hair and blue eyes.

Dim Dim, who was still perched on top of Alex’s head, clapped as well because it was very impressed by Fran’s answer.

Soon, the room was filled with applause because everyone agreed that Fran had given the best answer.

“Well then, I guess we have a clear winner,” Professor Arabella said with a smile. “However, I also like Mr. Stratos’ answer, so I will award him three hundred points. As for Ms. Terra, she will receive five hundred points for her thoughtful response.”

No one complained because they believed that this was fair.

Alex looked proudly at the young lady, whom he had grown to love while playing Endless Leveling Online.

While Astrea was the Goddess of Luck in his heart, Fran was like a tree, standing tall, despite her short stature.

Firm, steadfast, and resilient enough to weather any storm that came her way.

She had been Alex’s safe haven in a reality that could sometimes be too overbearing for to handle.

“Alex, I didn’t know history class was this good,” Chuck commented.

“You’re only saying that now because you earned some points,” Alex replied drily.

Chuck smirked, but didn't refute his best friend's words. Of course, if every history class was this exciting, everyone would be very happy to participate in it.

Seeing everyone's excitement, Professor Arabella decided to let her class get to know each other. She allowed her students to use the remaining time to mingle with and talk to each other.

Charles, who was also seated beside Alex, watched as the ladies approached his two friends and chatted with them.

Unlike Alex and Chuck, Charles didn't want to stand out. He was already happy to be in the same class as his two new friends.

However, something else had taken root inside his heart because he now understood that keeping a low profile wouldn't benefit him.

His goal was to accumulate enough academy points to buy Aurelia's Tear, which would cure Eris' disease.

He realized that in order for that to happen, he had to actively participate in future discussions and enjoy his school life as much as he could.

When the first class finally ended, it was time for them to go their separate ways to attend the classes that they had chosen.

Alex had planned to go to the Magic Knight

Training Grounds, which were meant for those who wanted to excel in both martial arts and magic.

Since he was technically also a Magic Knight, this was a class that he had placed on top of his list.

Charles followed Alex because he was on the same boat as him.

He could also wield magic and summon Ant Monsters, which he had acquired after absorbing the Dungeon Core of the Hidden Dungeon.

Likewise, Chuck was headed the same way because he wanted to learn how to use magic in combat.

To Alex's surprise, Lavinia was also at the Magic Knight training grounds.

Unlike Alex, the young lady had an affinity with magic.

However, she hadn't prioritized using it in the past.

But, things were different now.

She understood that there were students of the same generation that were stronger than her.

In order to not get left behind by these prodigies, she planned to incorporate her magic into her sword skills, which would elevate her fighting abilities to the next level.

Chapter 166: Heroes Of Might And Magic [Part 1]

Darius, the Instructor of the Magic Knight Class, looked at the First Years with a faint smile.

When his gaze landed on Alex, his smile widened a bit because the young man had left a good impression on him.

That was the first time he had seen a First Year challenge a hundred Rank 2 Monsters, and although they were just projections, they didn't differ much from the real thing!

'Maybe this year, it will be different,' Darius thought as he glanced at the right side of the training field, where the Second Years of the Magic Knight Class were currently gathered.

Their Instructor was a gorgeous lady who wielded a blade that was as long as she was tall.

Her name was Professor Ravena Blackmarch and she was looking forward to today's lesson.

Every year, at the start of the school term, they had a tradition where the First Years would have a sparring match with the Second Years.

More often than not, all the First Years would receive a beating without being able to fight back against their seniors.

This tradition was carried out to make sure that the arrogant First Years would be brought down a peg and made to realize that there was always someone stronger than them.

Of course, there would always be exceptions.

The so-called Prodigies would often make themselves known, beating their seniors one-sidedly.

Because of this, those who had achieved a top rank during the class allocation trials would also face the top rankers of the Second Year.

Lavinia had taken the Trial of Might and Magic while Alex had taken the Trial of Defense.

Both of them were the Top Rankers of their respective trials, which was why Darius was looking forward to the sparring match between his class and Professor Ravena's.

"First and foremost, let me all welcome you to the Magic Knight Class," Professor Darius began. "I will be teaching you everything you need to know about the use of Magic... as well as Aura."

Magic Knights, Magic swordsmen, and Battle Mages usually chose between Aura and Magic.

Both were viable for them. But sometimes, focusing on just one field until you mastered it would yield greater results.

"I'm sure that all of you already know that the concept of being a Magic Knight is flexibility," Darius stated. "Unlike focusing on wielding only weapons or just casting magic spells, we dabble with both fields at the same time.

"Due to this hybrid style of learning, some believe that our progress will be slower than those who focus on wielding weapons or those who master only the ways of magic.

"While this may sound logical, I believe that progress varies on a case by case basis. Although it is hard, there will always be exceptions. And, I wonder... are there any exceptions among you?"

Alex, Charles, and Laventia glanced at each other and smiled at the same time.

Since their seniors in the Ironheart Dormitory had already told them what was going to happen today, they had already prepared themselves mentally for the sparring match later.

"As this is our first day, we will do the tradition of the Magic Knight Class," Darius declared. "All of you are going to spar with your seniors. Don't worry, we will be using wooden weapons for this spar, so none of you will die... probably."

A chuckle reached everyone's ears as the sexy Professor of the Second Years approached Darius.

"Stop scaring the kids," Professor Ravena commented. "Don't worry, my children have already experienced this when they were First Years, so they already know what to do. Isn't that right, everyone?"

""Yes, Professor!""

Just like what Professor Ravena said, the Second Years had already experienced this spar a year ago.

The majority of them had lost terribly against their seniors. Because of this, they were itching to give their beloved juniors the same suffering they had experienced back then.

Among the Second Years, a young man with short purple hair glared at Alex.

He was none other than Cassian Nocturne, who had recently got into a quarrel with Alex because his sister, Astrea, had apologized to the young man.

'Oh great, the Siscon is glaring at me,' Alex thought. 'If I remember correctly, he has just broken through to become a Rank 4 Sword Saint recently.'

Alex's combined stats, not including the stat bonuses of his equipment, was 306. This made him a Rank 2 Oathkeeper.

Rank 2 students were the norm among the First Years, so Alex wasn't particularly outstanding among his peers.

Cassian, on the other hand, was a Rank 4 Sword Saint, which meant that his base stats was over 800.

In short, based on stats alone, Alex had no way of defeating Cassian in a duel. However, stats alone would not decide whether one would win from a fight or not.

While having higher stats made someone stronger, strategy, luck, and battle experience also played a role in deciding the outcome of a battle.

Alex could level endlessly. By gaining stat points, he would also climb higher in the human rankings.

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A/N: to give you guys an idea of the stats needed to climb a Rank, refer to this table.

Paragons – 200,000+

Rank 9 = 50,000 – 199,000

Rank 8 = 12,800 – 50,000

Rank 7 = 6,401 – 12,800

Rank 6 = 3,201 – 6,400

Rank 5 = 1,601 – 3200

Rank 4 = 801 – 1,600

Rank 3 = 500 – 800

Rank 2 = 250 – 499

Rank 1 = 150 to 249

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The main reason why Cassian had an overwhelming advantage in stat points was due to the fact that he was one of the Main Heroes of ELO.

Just like Renard who gained bonus stats in Strength every time he added a point, Cassian also had a similar advantage.

Every two points allocated in Strength or Intelligence would give Cassian one bonus point to either Strength or Intelligence.

Whichever had the lowest stat between these two Stat Parameters would gain the bonus point.

This was the reason why those who became Rank 4 at such an early age were referred to as Prodigies.

“Lavinia Hartwell, please step forward,” Darius announced. “Your opponent will be Cassian Nocturne.”

The Professor then threw a wooden sword at the young lady, which the latter caught easily.

“Yes, Sir.” Lavinia stepped forward and headed to the center of the training field in order to represent the First Years.

“Cassian, you already know what to do,” Professor Ravena said.

“Sorry, Professor,” Cassian replied, “but you can send someone else. The one I want to fight is that person.”

Cassian didn’t hesitate to point at Alex before using his thumb to make a slicing gesture across his neck.

Clearly, he wanted to beat the crap out of the person that his sister had apologized to, and make the punk understand that his sister was off limits!

“Hah... fine.” Professor Ravena shook her head helplessly. “Jessica, take the lead.”

“Yes, Professor,” Jessica replied and took a wooden sword from the weapon racket that was on the side of the training field.

The young lady with steel-blue eyes and short-cropped auburn hair gave her opponent a nod of greeting.

She carried herself like a blade unsheathed—sharp, efficient, and ready to strike. The young lady was a Rank 3 Rune Fencer, and her strikes were swift and deadly.

“My name is Jessica McClain,” Jessica said. “Let’s have a good duel.”

“Lavinia Hartwell,” Lavinia replied. “Please treat me kindly, Senior!”

The young catkin was a Horizon Striker, which also specialized in speed and swift strikes.

Unfortunately, she was not wielding her signature weapon, a sword whip, because there was no such thing as a wooden sword whip among the non-lethal weapons that were available on the training grounds.

Even so, Lavinia faced her opponent with determination, holding the wooden sword in her hand like a trusted friend who always accompanied her in battle.

Seeing that the two students were ready to fight, Darius raised his hand and declared the start of the match.

“Fight!” Darius shouted.

As soon as the signal was given, the two young ladies clashed, heralding the start of a rivalry, which would put the determination and skill of both classes to the test.

Chapter 167: Heroes Of Might And Magic [Part 2]

Lavinia moved gracefully as she dodged, parried, and countered Jessica’s swift sword strikes.

Her performance made Professor Darius and Professor Ravena nod in approval.

Even though Jessica was stronger than Lavinia when it came to stats, the Catkin had more battle experience than her opponent.

Unlike Jessica who came from a traditional knight family, Lavinia had always fought against stronger opponents than her.

Her life and death battle against the Mutant Spider, as well as the expedition in the Dungeon of Beginnings, had allowed her to make a breakthrough, not only in her sword skills, but also in her mentality.

Jessica couldn't help but grit her teeth in frustration because her junior soon proved to be faster and more agile than her.

'If only she knew that Lavinia is already fighting with a handicap,' Alex mused as he saw Jessica grimace in frustration and concentration.

"Hah!" Jessica decided to go all out. She unleashed her magical prowess, coating her wooden sword with a blue light.

Lavinia didn't hold back and did the same, her sword shining bright.

A loud crack that sounded like a thunder clap reverberated through the training grounds.

The two wooden swords snapped in half and fell uselessly on the ground, signaling the end of the battle.

"A draw?" Lavinia asked, looking at her broken wooden sword.

"No, you win," Jessica conceded with a sigh. "It seems that I still need to train a lot."

Her sword lay on the ground, cleanly broken into two.

Jessica and Lavinia had done their best and resorted to their strongest attacks, resulting in the destruction of their wooden swords.

"First match goes to the First Year!" Professor Ravena shouted, making the First Years cheer.

"Hah, you took that loss very gracefully," Professor Darius noted with a laugh.

"A loss is a loss," Professor Ravena replied easily. "I don't mind giving your class a victory of two or three. After all, three wins out of fifty is still pitiful, no?"

Darius almost choked on his laughter after realizing that what his close friend said was right.

Three wins out of fifty fights was truly pitiful.

"We'll see about that," Darius scoffed. "Alex, it's your turn! Beat the crap out of that siskon, Cassian!"

Cassian looked at his Professor from last year and cursed him in his heart.

"Professor, have you forgotten that I made you proud last year?" Cassian asked.

"Last year is last year," Professor Darius answered. "You're one of my enemies now. You traitor, hmph!"

Professor Ravena giggled because she knew that this was Darius' silly attempt at guilt-tripping her student.

Had Cassian been matched against any other student, he might have gone easy on them as a favor to his former instructor. Unfortunately, he held a bitter grudge against Alex, so he had no intention to compromise.

"Oh?" Cassian smirked. "Very well then. I guess I'll make sure to cripple your favorite student this year."

Alex blinked before looking worriedly at Professor Ravena, hoping that she would interfere and remind her student that this wasn't supposed to be that serious.

“Don’t worry!” Professor Ravena winked at Alex. “There are healers standing by. Even if he cripples you, you’ll be just fine!”

The corner of Alex’s lips twitched before asking a question.

“Can I fight with Dim Dim?” Alex asked while pointing to the top of his head.

The Dim Sum God held a brittle vial in its hands, already raring to rumble.

“No,” Professor Darius and Professor Ravena answered at the same time.

“External help is not allowed in this spar,” Professor Darius explained.

Dim Dim reluctantly returned its brittle vial to its dimensional storage before jumping to Charles’ head.

“Dim Dim!” Dim Dim raised its small hand to cheer Alex on, eliciting smiles from many students, including some Second Years who couldn’t resist its cuteness.

Alex took a wooden sword and a wooden shield from the weapons rack and headed to the center of the training ground to face off against Cassian.

“I’m telling you this in advance, I will not hold back,” Cassian declared. “So, if you don’t want to die, fight me seriously.”

“Professor, he wants to kill me,” Alex complained to Professor Darius.

“Don’t worry, you won’t die.” Professor Darius shrugged. “Probably.”

Knowing that he was about to face someone who wanted nothing more than to beat the ever-loving hell out of him, Alex decided to focus solely on defense.

However, he doubted that a wooden shield would last long against the merciless attack of a Sword Saint.

Professor Darius raised his hand and signaled the start of the fight.

“Fight!”

As soon as those words were spoken, Alex immediately took a defensive stance and braced himself for battle.

“Any last words?” Cassian taunted while making a few practice swings with his wooden sword, as if testing it to see if it could deliver the beating he intended for Alex.

Alex was very tempted to say “Your Sister!” but he knew that if he did that, Cassian would skewer him without a second thought.

So, he decided to propose something.

“Give me a handicap,” Alex answered. “Don’t use Aura or Magic in this spar.”

“Fine.” Cassian sneered before taking a step forward.

This was one of his signature abilities, Flash Step. It allowed him to close the gap between him and his enemy in a heartbeat.

But, Alex was already expecting this.

Although he was weaker than Cassian by nearly five hundred stat points, he had plenty of experience fighting one-on-one battles in PVP matches.

After all, his rank in the Global Rankings was 69, so he had already faced many powerful opponents that were strong enough to make the current Cassian look cute in comparison.

“Shield Charge!” Alex didn’t hesitate to unleash his skill as soon as Cassian vanished from his sight.

A second later, his shield clashed with a wooden sword, taking the Second Year by surprise.

“Balance Breaker!” Alex swung his sword, but his opponent blocked it successfully.

Cassian then unleashed a counter-attack, but the young man managed to deflect it with his shield.

“Shield Bash!” Alex used his shield to bash the sword in Cassian’s hand, hoping that he would be able to break it.

But his opponent merely stepped aside and dodged Alex’s desperate attack.

At least, that was what Cassian thought.

A moment later, he was forced to raise his sword to block a magical shield that suddenly slammed itself toward his face at point-blank range.

“You’re full of tricks,” Cassian remarked as he kicked the side of Alex’s body. Alex barely managed to block it, and still skidded a few meters due to the force behind that attack. “But in the face of absolute strength, all tricks are meaningless.”

Alex might look like he was at a great disadvantage, but he was very calm inside.

He knew that Cassian was just toying with him. The sison wanted to prolong the fight to drag out Alex's suffering.

But what the Sword Saint didn't know was that Alex was simply looking for an opportunity to strike.

Cassian might be fast and strong, but Alex's Master, Cairo, was still faster.

As long as an opportunity presented itself, Alex was confident that he would be able to give the arrogant sison a devastating blow.

"Are you just going to hide behind that shield of yours?" Cassian taunted. "I guess I'll just have to break it, no?"

"Do it if you can," Alex replied.

"Gladly." Cassian once again vanished from where he stood, only to reappear before Alex with the intention of breaking his shield.

However, the young man only smiled as he crouched down to thrust his sword into the ground.

"Grand Cross!"

A radiant light erupted around him, which he believed was enough to make Cassian feel a world of pain from his surprise attack.

Chapter 168: I'll Punch It To Make It Feel Better

Alex knew that if he fought fair and square against Cassian, his chances of winning were zero.

Even if Cassian had promised to not use magic or aura, a Rank 4 Sword Saint wasn't a joke.

Moreover, people would subconsciously protect themselves if they felt that their lives were in danger even if they had promised to hold back.

And that was why...

A golden flash of light illuminated the surroundings. Bright as it was, this light didn't last long, and was dispersed right away.

The next second, Alex was sent flying and crashed into a wall of the training ground.

The young man coughed out a mouthful of blood before collapsing on the ground, unconscious.

"Sh*t!" Professor Ravena cursed as she ran towards Alex's direction.

As soon as she arrived by the young man's side, she didn't hesitate to force him to drink a high-grade potion. He only managed to drink about half, and she sprinkled the leftover potion on his body.

Cassian, who finally snapped out of his daze, realized what he had done.

The moment Alex's Grand Cross had activated, Cassian had subconsciously released his Aura and unleashed the skill, Force Impact.

This had created a powerful shockwave that had blasted away the young man towards the edge of the training grounds.

"You still don't know how to control yourself, you brat!" Darius scolded as he smacked Cassian's head, making the latter cry out in pain. "Damn it. You better make up to Alex later, or else I'll make sure to tell your sister about what has happened here. Do you want her to apologize to him again, huh?!"

"P-Professor, it wasn't intentional," Cassian replied.

"I know," Professor Darius stated. "But it doesn't matter now. You broke your word in front of everyone, and seriously injured my student. You're strong, Cassian, but you lack control. If things continue like this until you graduate, I'm afraid you'll just be a second-rate magic knight at best."

Cassian bit his lower lip, but he couldn't refute his former professor. Harsh as Darius' advice was, he was right that Cassian needed to learn to manage his emotions better.

The teenage boy sighed before shifting his gaze to Alex, who was being carried by Charles to the infirmary for a thorough examination of his injuries.

Lavinia followed behind them, worry written all over her face.

Cassian watched them go, and admitted that he lost his match against Alex to everyone on the training grounds.

A few minutes later...

"Are we finally out of the training grounds?" Alex asked as soon as he opened his eyes.

"... You were just pretending to be unconscious?" Charles, who was still carrying Alex, blinked in confusion.

"I blanked out earlier, but Professor Ravena's high potion managed to wake me up," Alex answered. "Thank you, Charles. You can put me down now."

Lavinia breathed a sigh of relief after seeing that the young man was at least conscious. However, just like Charles, she was wondering why he had pretended to be knocked out cold the whole time.

"Don't look at me like that guys," Alex protested. "Cassian's blow really hurt, you know? I did what I did to make him realize that he can't take things too far here in the academy. Also, I will make him compensate me for breaking his words."

The young man smiled evilly because he now had something to use against Cassian in the future.

"Then, are you going back?" Lavinia asked.

“No.” Alex shook his head. “I’ll go to the infirmary and rest until the next class. Charles also needs to participate in the spar, so he can’t stay away for long. Isn’t that right, Dim Dim?”

The Dim Sum God was catching up to them, having stayed behind to throw a brittle vial at Cassian’s clothes.

Unlike the other brittle vials it had used in previous battles, this one contained skunk’s essence. Predictably, it released a foul stench at the moment of impact.

The little one had a vengeful side to it too, especially if someone hurt its friend.

“Dim Dim!” Dim Dim puffed its body up, telling Alex that it had avenged him.

After hearing about the Dim Sum God’s revenge, Alex couldn’t help but chuckle as he picked up his partner and praised it for a job well done.

“You’re a bad influence on Dim Dim, Alex,” Lavinia remarked as she shook her head while smiling. The innocent small bun was now very, very mischievous.

“It’s fine, Cassian can probably remove the smell with anti-odor magic or something,” Alex replied. “Now, the two of you should return to the training grounds. I can go to the infirmary myself.”

Lavinia and Charles exchanged a glance before bidding Alex goodbye.

They were very curious to know which of their classmates would win against the Second Years, who had shown them how strong they were after training in the academy for a year.

Alex and Dim Dim headed to the infirmary as planned because the young man wanted to see if two of the most mysterious supporting characters were in the infirmary at this time.

A few minutes later...

"Wow..." Alex muttered as soon as he saw the two nurses of the academy. "They really exist."

Two young ladies with long silver hair turned to look at him the moment he entered the infirmary.

The lady on the left had silver-white hair streaked with pastel blue. Just like her unusual hair, one of her eyes was blue while the other was silver. She was Lin.

Rin, her twin, looked almost identical, except that she had pale violet streaks in her hair and one violet eye.

"Sister, is this called harassment?" Lin asked after several seconds of silence. "This guy is staring at us as if we are some kind of rare animal."

"Lin, prepare the spiked bat," Rin replied. "Maybe he has suffered some head injury. It will be best if we tenderize it first."

"What thickness should I get, Sister?"

"The extra thick one that is made from Adamantine."

"W-Wait!" Alex finally returned to reality because he remembered that these girls would really attack him if they felt like it. "I'm here for a checkup! I was injured earlier."

"So, you're a patient?" Lin asked. "Why didn't you say right away? Come, sit so we can examine you."

"Tell us where it hurts," Rin added. "I'll punch it to make it feel better."

Alex didn't know if he should laugh or cry because the twins were exactly as he remembered.

They were very brutal nurses, but they could really heal people by punching, kicking, or hitting them with a bat.

That was the power they possessed, and its contradictory nature had made many players quite fond of these two nurses.

Their passive skill was called Healing Strike, which allowed them to use healing magic in their attacks.

The funny thing was that their active skills worked in tandem with this passive skill.

These girls had their own martial arts, and their core skills were named Heal Slap, Tenderizer Touch, Feel-Better Fist, Reboot-Roundhouse, Bat of Blessing, and Kickstart My Heart.

Their fandom was believed to be made up of masochists, who truly enjoyed the two nurses' tender loving care.

"Um, I just want a normal check up please," Alex said after seeing that Lin had taken out an adamantite baseball bat from a closet.

"I see." Lin nodded. To Alex's relief, she returned the baseball bat back to the closet.

Alex then heard a satisfied sigh on the nurse table, which made him look in that direction.

There, he saw Dim Dim getting Rin's Tenderizer Touch, which was similar to a massage.

"Sister, this little guy is so squishy," Rin said, looking very happy as she massaged Dim Dim with her soft, delicate hands.

"Sister, this creature is really cute," Lin, whose heart was about to melt after she touched Dim Dim, commented. "Its body is indeed so squishy."

"I know right? Does it feel good, Dim Dim?" Rin asked.

"Dim~"

Had Dim Dim been a slime, it might have already melted into a puddle due to how relaxed it was feeling at the moment.

"Um, about my check up?" Alex asked.

"Fine." Rin reluctantly stopped pinching Dim Dim's cheek and motioned for Alex to sit so that she could examine him.

Half a minute later, Alex felt as if all the bones inside of his body had turned into jelly because of Rin's Tenderizer Touch.

He could now understand why Dim Dim had looked so content earlier because even he had to give this kind of service a five-star review.

Perhaps due to how relaxed he and Dim Dim became, the two soon fell asleep. They were only woken up a few hours later by Charles and Lavinia who had finished their lessons in the Magic Knight Class.

Chapter 169: Endless Horizon

"What happened?" Chuck asked as soon as he joined Alex, Charles, and Lavinia at the cafeteria table.

"Alex and Dim Dim look... different."

"I know right?" Charles grinned. "The two of them are practically glowing."

"Dim Dim and I just got some therapeutic therapy in the Infirmary earlier," Alex explained. "Isn't that right, Dim Dim?"

"Dim~" Dim Dim, who was casually drinking its fruit juice through a straw, replied cheerfully.

“Therapeutic therapy?” Chuck blinked. “They offer that kind of service there? Maybe I should go visit sometime.”

“You should,” Alex replied. “It might be painful at first, but I guarantee that it will be an amazing experience.”

“I’m already looking forward to it.” Chuck smiled.

Now that Chuck was here, Alex finally asked Charles and Lavinia the question that had been nagging him ever since waking up in the infirmary.

“What happened during the sparring match?” Alex inquired.

“It was a one-sided beat down,” Lavinia replied. “But, we managed to win four times out of fifty. For some reason, Professor Darius was already very pleased with that outcome.”

“Last year, the First Years only managed to get one win,” Charles pointed out. “And it was all thanks to Cassian. Since we managed to beat last year’s record, Professor Darius decided to give the whole class 100 Academy Points as a reward.”

“Wow, he must really be happy to spend all those points in one day.” Alex was quite surprised that the Professor hadn’t batted an eye when giving out such an award to his students.

Actually, the Professors didn’t have an infinite amount of Academy Points that they could give to their students.

They had a monthly quota and once that was used up, they could no longer award points to their students till the next month.

This was to prevent favoritism and point inflation. The system could be easily abused if academy points could be given freely without restrictions.

Each Professor only had thirty thousand academy points per month at their disposal, and Professor Darius had already used up a third of that quota by rewarding his First Years with 100 academy points each.

Of course, there were other ways for students to earn academy points. They could sell or trade their points to their fellow students.

In addition, they could also complete missions found in the Academy's Quest Hall, which was similar to how an Adventurer Guild operated.

As long as the mission was completed, the academy points would be automatically transferred to the student's personal account, which stored their merit points in the academy.

"Just in case you guys forgot, the club recruitment will start in two days," Chuck reminded. "Although there are many clubs in the academy, the only clubs that matter are the Twelve Crest Clubs. We're going to join the Obsidian Fang, right?"

"Right." Alex nodded. "We should aim to pass their trial. That way, the Lionheart Club will not be able to bully you."

Chuck coughed lightly because this was indeed the main reason why he wished to join one of the Crest Clubs.

Once he was part of Obsidian Fang, his older brother wouldn't be able to casually bully him because it would cause friction between their two clubs.

Even if Caspian came from a Ducal Family, he would not dare to mess with anyone who belonged to one of the twelve Crest Clubs.

The members of these clubs had the backing of powerful families that played important roles in the politics of the Kingdom of Avalon as well as its surrounding kingdoms.

Alex had invited Nessia and Renard to join the Obsidian Fang, but only Nessia showed any interest.

Renard had simply told him to “mind your own business!” and walked away like the lone wolf that he was.

It was during the first months of the school year that Renard would get an explosive growth, allowing him to become Rank 4 Berserker Juggernaut before his first year in the academy drew to an end.

‘I better patch up my relationship with him before then,’ Alex realized. He didn’t want to be Renard’s enemy because he was one of the Heroes of ELO.

With that in mind, he planned to try to befriend Renard as early as possible so that he wouldn’t end up on top of Renard’s kill list.

Two days later...

The Academy became very lively as various stalls were set up on the plaza.

This early promotion of the various clubs would last for a week. After that, the students could apply casually at their own pace.

Dozens of clubs did their utmost to gain as many new members as possible during this time of the year.

Some of them went as far as giving out freebies as well as “bribes” for those who would join their club.

The Academy gave each club a budget, proportional to their size and the activities that they performed.

Naturally, the twelve Crest Clubs received large amounts of funds every year, allowing them to stand above the other clubs.

Although there were many stalls in the plaza, the majority of them were practically indistinguishable from one another.

Why?

Because at the center of the plaza were twelve stalls that stood out from the rest.

Each one of them hung a banner representing the emblem of their club.

Alex, Charles, Lavinia, Chuck, and Nessia stood in front of the stall where a banner of a black wolf, head raised in a silent howl against a crescent moon, could be seen.

All of them were very excited to take the trial, but after seeing the notice in front of them, their excitement turned into dismay.

“Obsidian Fang will only recruit one member among the First, Second, and Third Years this year. Only the best student of each grade will be allowed to join our ranks.”

Alex blinked once then twice before his eyes widened in shock.

‘How could I forget this condition?!’ Even in the game, Obsidian Fang only recruited one member from each grade.

So, the players who wished to join this club must excel in its trial, because only one of them would be allowed to join them.

This was the so-called “exclusivity” that the twelve Crest Clubs enjoyed.

Unlike other clubs which preferred quantity over quality, the Obsidian Fang only wanted the best, and nothing else.

“This...” Chuck was at a loss of words because he wanted to join the Obsidian Fang with his friends.

If only one of them could join this prestigious club, then what was the point in joining?

“Are all of you going to take the trial of our club?” a young lady with a sharp gaze asked. “If not, please don’t block the front of our stall. Only the best will be allowed to join our ranks.”

Before Chuck could even say something, a familiar voice spoke from behind them.

“So, are you going to join it or not?” Renard, who had decided to check the Obsidian Fang, inquired.

The corner of his lips was curled up into a smirk.

Renard knew that Chuck’s and Alex’s happy-go-lucky group was in a dilemma because not all of them could join the Obsidian Fang at the same time.

“Are you going to join them?” Alex asked.

“Of course,” Renard replied. “They say that only the best among the First Years can join them, and I am definitely the best among all of you.”

“Wow.” Nessia chuckled. “His skin is as thick as the walls of this academy.”

Renard shrugged, not minding the young lady’s taunt.

“So, what now?” Charles asked. “Should we try the other Crest Clubs?”

Since all of them couldn’t join the Obsidian Fang, he would rather look for other clubs so that he could still stay with his friends during their club activities.

Just as Alex was thinking of what to do, Lavinia spoke up.

“Do we really need to join these clubs?” Lavinia asked. “If we can’t join the Obsidian Fang, then how about we just make our own club? That way, we will be able to do whatever we want.”

“Nice idea!” Chuck was immediately onboard.

Frankly, Chuck was a very lonely person who wished to have many friends in the academy.

This was why he wanted to make friends, as well as be part of the same club as them.

Alex knew that there was indeed an option in the game where one could create their own club in the academy.

However, they had to sign some documents and send them to the student council to get their approval.

There was always the possibility that their application could be denied.

Also, the current president of the student council secretly hated the scholarship students, so any application to form new clubs made by them would have very little chance of getting approved.

“Don’t think too much, Alex,” Lavinia, who saw the young man’s frown, said. “My grandfather and the Headmaster made a bet during the second trial of the academy and my grandfather won.

“Because of this, the Headmaster will listen to one of his requests. It just so happens that before he left this city, he told the Headmaster that he will give me permission to use the favor that the Headmaster owed him.”

The young lady smirked and leaned in to whisper in Alex’s ear.

“That means that I can also ask that the Club we want to create receive the same funding as the Crest Clubs,” Lavinia revealed. “Won’t that be a better alternative than joining them?”

Lavinia's words instantly convinced Alex.

"All you need to do is think of the Club's name, and I will go fill up the documents for you," Lavinia said with confidence. "So, do you have a name in mind?"

Alex was unable to give an answer right away. However, after organizing his thoughts, he remembered a name that had made its mark known in the gaming industry.

"Endless Horizon," Alex replied. "Let's make a club called Endless Horizon."

That was the name of Alex's Guild back on Earth, and was also the number one guild in the world of ELO.

Even though he was lightyears away from his own home world, Alex believed that the legacy of his guild that he had carried on his shoulder back then would once again make its mark in the pages of history in the world of Arcana.

Chapter 170: Club Application Acceptance

The current Student Council President of Frieden Academy was a Fourth Year student who went by the name of Theo Ashborne.

He was the eldest son of a Ducal Family that came from the Solara Kingdom.

It was a kingdom that lay west of Avalon and had friendly ties with it.

Theo Ashborne was the embodiment of nobility refined by responsibility.

As the current Student Council President of Frieden Academy, he carried himself with a calm authority that few could challenge.

With short blond hair always immaculately groomed and eyes like sharpened glass—cool, analytical, and always watching—Theo was both admired and feared by the student body.

There was no doubt in anyone's mind that he was very good at what he did.

In fact, he was so good that it made others feel as if he wasn't human.

This was what made him scary in the eyes of those who had wished to cause trouble for him in the past.

Many claimed that he was a monster hiding inside a human vessel. Many rumors surrounded him. While some were true, others were simply spread by the people who feared him.

And just like always, the perfect president of Frieden Academy sat at his office desk, busy signing papers that were passed to him by his secretary.

"It's always busy this time of year," Theo's secretary, Cassandra, muttered before placing a cup of tea on the table. "There are so many people applying for club creation. Do they really think that the academy has a budget for them all?"

"It is within their rights to apply for club creation," Theo replied as he stamped a seal of approval on the documents that he had just finished signing.

"But, not all of them deserve it right, President?" Cassandra smirked as she looked at a couple of documents placed neatly on the left of the table, each marked conspicuously with the seal of rejection.

"Right." Theo nodded. "Some are just made out of the passion of youth, without any goal in mind. Just like this one..."

Cassandra glanced at the document that the student council president was holding.

It was none other than a completed club application form.

"Endless Horizon?" Cassandra arched an eyebrow, amused. "Let's see what this club is about."

The president allowed Cassandra to take the document from his hands and read its contents.

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Frieden Academy – Club Formation Proposal

Proposal for the Establishment of the Student Organization: Endless Horizon

Submitted by:

Alex Stratos (President)

Lavinia Hartwell (Vice President)

Members:

Charles Lambert (First Year)

Chuck No Rizz (First Year)

Nessia Var (First Year)

Dim Dim (Club Mascot)

Club Name – Endless Horizon

Mission Statement:

“The world does not end at the edge of the map, beyond it is an Endless Horizon.”

Endless Horizon is a proposed student organization built around the ideals of exploration, discovery, and daring purpose.

Our vision is to create a community of adventurers, researchers, and pioneers within Frieden Academy who strive to push beyond the known, not recklessly, but with resolve, discipline, and unity.

The name “Endless Horizon” reflects our guiding belief that no matter how far we’ve come, there is always more to seek, more to learn, and more to uncover.

Whether within ancient dungeons, forgotten ruins, or uncharted frontiers, we intend to reach places where the sky seems to touch eternity, and return with knowledge worth sharing.

Objectives:

- Conduct sanctioned dungeon expeditions and field adventures to enhance practical experience.
- Research and record magical phenomena, artifact history, and rare ecosystem encounters.
- Promote interdisciplinary teamwork across combat, magic, history, and survival fields.
- Serve as a bridge between theory and fieldwork, enhancing the Academy’s scholarly output.
- Publish expedition reports and journals to contribute to Frieden Academy’s growing archives.

Membership Requirements:

Open to students of all years who meet minimum competency or show potential.

Members must pass the basic Orientation on Field Protocol and Safety (provided internally).

Full adherence to Academy standards during all operations!

Faculty Advisor:

Rowan Vademont

“... I was very impressed with what’s written here until I reached the last part,” Cassandra commented as she pinched the bridge of her nose. “Seriously, their Faculty Advisor is the Headmaster? What nonsense is this?”

Theo scoffed. “I did a background check on Alex Stratos and Lavinia Hartwell. Both of them are scholarship students. Alex Stratos was the top ranker in the Trial of Defense, while Lavinia Hartwell was first in the Might and Magic Trial.”

Cassandra frowned. “So, that means that they both have potential. However, putting the Headmaster down as their Faculty Advisor is too much. Did they make this club application as a prank?”

“I wish,” Theo replied. “Unfortunately, I received a call from the Headmaster earlier, informing me to accept this club application.”

“What?!” Cassandra’s eyes widened in shock after hearing those words. “The Headmaster personally approved of it? Does that mean that he’s really the Faculty Advisor of that Club?”

“No,” Theo answered. “He said that he will look for a club advisor for them among the staff. However, this club is as good as accepted since the Headmaster is backing them.”

“... Just who are they to receive this VIP Treatment?” Cassandra’s frown deepened. “This is the first time that the Headmaster has done something like this.”

"I have also voiced my complaint to the Headmaster, and he said that although this club will be approved, they won't receive any budget from the academy," Theo explained calmly. "I guess that's the trade-off they must accept to get their club accepted."

Theo usually rejected the club application that came from Commons unless they had made a very compelling reason for the establishment of their club.

Out of a hundred club applications, he had only approved one of them. Alex's club would be the second one to gain his "reluctant" approval.

"So they are a club in name only?" Cassandra cocked her head slightly. "What's the point then? If they don't receive any financial support from the academy, their activities will be greatly limited since they won't have the necessary funds."

Theo simply shrugged. Elegantly, of course.

"Also, dungeon expeditions and field explorations require academy tickets, which cost money as well," the bewildered secretary continued. "They're just scholarship students. How will they have the money to burn?"

"That's their problem." Theo gestured for Cassandra to return the club application to him. "However, tell our people to closely monitor their activities. If they break any rules, we will immediately terminate their club."

Cassandra understood what he was implying. "Poor kids. Is this what you meant by youthful passion, President?"

Theo nodded before stamping his seal of approval on Alex's club application form.

"All clubs must submit their activity records at the end of the first quarter of the year," Theo stated. "If they are unable to show any proof that they have been doing club activities, their club will be terminated."

Cassandra felt sorry for the First Years who had gotten their way through the back door. This was what Theo, who strictly followed the rules, hated the most.

Now that they had attracted the attention of the student council president, all their club activities would be heavily scrutinized from this moment onwards.

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Inside Ironheart Dormitory...

“Let me get this straight... Our club application will be approved, but we won’t have any funding for club activities?” Nessia asked in disbelief.

“Yes,” Alex replied. “But don’t worry too much, Nessia. Lavinia and I will provide the funds for our club activities.”

The Catkin princess had received ten thousand gold coins from her grandfather before he returned to the Hartwell Clan.

That was supposed to be Lavinia’s tuition fee for her enrollment.

However, since she had managed to become a scholarship student, the academy promptly refunded those ten thousand gold coins.

In addition, all scholarship students received a monthly stipend of 20 gold coins.

An average family of four or five living in the Capital City of Harmonia needed at least five gold coins per month to survive.

In the countryside, five gold coins was enough for a similar family to survive for a couple of months.

In other words, as long as the scholarship students were thrifty and responsible, they would be able to save up since the food and lodging in the academy were free.

“Also, Nessia, our club will be self-sufficient once we start our explorations and dungeon expeditions,” Alex pointed out. “But Charles, you will not be allowed to make any dungeon dives, okay?”

Charles didn’t protest. He knew that the moment he entered a dungeon, his passive skill, Challenger’s Mark, would activate.

It would force the monsters from the lower floors to go to the upper floors, which would cause a monster outbreak inside the dungeon.

For the sake of everyone’s safety and well-being, dungeon dives were something Charles had to sit out.

“Fine.” Nessia sighed. “Since I know what you guys can do, I’ll trust you this time.”

Chuck, who had been listening to the conversation since a while ago, decided to ask a question.

“Are you sure the club will be approved?” Chuck inquired. “I don’t want to be a party pooper, but Theo Ashborne is very strict when it comes to clubs created by the scholarship students.”

Alex and Lavinia exchanged a glance before nodding at the same time.

“Don’t worry, our club will be accepted without fail,” Lavinia assured. “We’ll just worry about the fundings and activities later.”

Chuck was still doubtful about their club application. But since Lavinia sounded confident, he decided to believe her words.

He was very excited about spending time in the club that he had made with his friends, so he was looking forward to the adventures that they would have during their first year at the academy.