

Endless 211

Chapter 211: Fortune Favors The Bold

"The next person that we need to become part of our team is Astrea," Alex said while he glanced at Lavinia and Nessia, who were both in Class B. "If possible, try to become friends with her and invite her to join our club."

Lavinia and Nessia exchanged looks before frowning.

Astrea was extremely popular in their class. Many people also wanted her in their team, not because she was strong, but because of her beauty. Like Chuck, she was also part of a Ducal Family.

For nobles, connections were everything. Therefore, many students didn't mind carrying Astrea and protecting her until the event ended.

But Alex was different.

He knew Astrea's true potential, so having her with them was very important.

"We'll try our best," Lavinia promised. "But don't get your hopes up, okay?"

"Astrea is a social butterfly," Nessia commented. "The people who want her to join them aren't limited to the other students in Class B. The other classes want her too. But, Alex, Astrea is... clumsy, you know?"

"Right." Lavinia grinned. "She also has a bad sense of direction. Lastly, she seems to look down on commoners."

Alex chuckled. "Not only that, she likes to bully the weak and fear the strong. So, even if you are a commoner, as long as you're stronger than her, she won't dare to mess with you."

"You seem to know a lot about her," Chuck commented with a mischievous smile. "Do you perhaps like Astrea?"

Lavinia's ears perked up after hearing Chuck's comment. She had to admit that Astrea was quite beautiful, but she didn't think it necessarily outshone her own beauty!

Alex was about to say that Astrea was his Queen, but after realizing how embarrassing that would sound, he decided to downplay it a bit.

"Astrea is blessed by luck," Alex said seriously. "There is a famous quote that says fortune favors the bold. But anyone who is part of Astrea's group will be blessed by luck as well.

"She might be clumsy and a little arrogant at times. But once she recognizes someone as a friend, she will do everything in her power to help them when they are in trouble."

Alex then said a few things more before wrapping up the meeting.

However, just when Nessia was about to leave, Alex asked her to stay for a bit because he wanted to say something important to her.

A few minutes later, Nessia's eyes widened in shock as she looked at Alex in disbelief.

"Are you serious?" Nessia asked, her voice quivering. "We might get expelled if we do this, you know?"

"We won't," Alex assured. "Didn't I tell you that there is a condition for it to activate? If the conditions are not met then nothing will happen."

Nessia bit her lip because Alex's plan was crazy. Not to mention, it was a lot of work!

The one doing the heavy lifting would be her although he would be the one providing her with the resources to enact his plan.

Just as the young lady was about to reject Alex's proposal, the young man smiled faintly.

“Aren’t you curious?” Alex asked. “What will happen if this grand formation activates during the Battle Royale?”

“... I am indeed very curious,” Nessia admitted.

“Lastly, won’t you gain a lot of experience in building this grand formation?” Alex prompted as if he was a devil tempting the innocent young lady to sin. “Think about it. A First Year makes a grand formation.

“If it activates, the professors of the academy will be amazed and you will gain a lot of opportunities. If it doesn’t activate then you won’t lose anything. Won’t this be more beneficial to you in the long run?”

Nessia frowned as she clenched her fists. “Alex, just tell me, what is going to happen? If you tell me the real reason, I will do it. Ever since we met, I have felt that you see something in me that I don’t.

“Are you just overestimating my abilities or are you simply making fun of me? Even now, you ask me to do something like this. The risks outweigh the gain, and if the Professors find out about this, I will get expelled.”

Alex had read many novels and played many games back on Earth. He understood that one of the main sources of grief among protagonists and their loved ones could be summed up with a single word.

Misunderstandings.

A simple misunderstanding could spiral out of control and lead to events that shouldn’t have happened in the first place if the protagonist had been only more honest towards his lovers and friends.

Alex understood that right now he couldn’t afford to make Nessia misunderstand him.

With a long sigh, the young man finally explained the reason why he was asking Nessia to help him with this big project.

Once again, the young lady looked at Alex in disbelief. But, aside from that emotion, a dawn of realization also hit her.

"I see, so that's the reason why you put in some conditions," Nessia muttered. "But are you sure that what you say is going to happen will actually happen?"

"Yes," Alex answered without hesitation. "But if it doesn't happen then nothing will happen. The project that we will work on together will not hurt anyone. However, if something does happen... Surely you will feel better knowing that we have prepared for it?"

Nessia lowered her head because what Alex was saying made perfect sense. In the end, she reluctantly nodded and looked at her club president with determination.

"You will provide the resources, right?" Nessia asked.

"I will," Alex answered.

"Very well. I accept."

"Good. Thank you, Nessia. Know that you'll be saving not only our club members, but all the other First Years as well."

Nessia gave Alex one last glance before leaving the clocktower.

Her thoughts were a little muddy because the revelation she had gotten was simply too hard to believe.

However, Alex had said on more than one occasion that he was a Seer.

And although not all visions might come true, there was always a possibility that they would happen.

Since that was the case, it was better to be safe than sorry, especially for a big event like the Inter-Class Battle Royale.

Chapter 212: The Music Department's Emergency Meeting

At the Music Staff Room of the Academy...

A staring contest was taking place, and the contestants were Professor Arienna, her teaching assistant, and the Fairies in charge of the challenges in the Seventh Training Room.

"I'm sure all of you already know why I have called you here to the staff room," Professor Arienna said.

"Of course, we do!" Doh replied with a smile. "You're going to give us all a raise, right?!"

"Yay!"

All the fairies cheered and clapped their hands, making the corner of the Music Professor's lips twitch.

"That's not what I called you for. There's no raise," Professor Arienna clarified. "I'm here to ask you—were your heads kicked by a donkey? Otherwise, why is Alex Stratos the top ranker in all the challenges?"

The Professor then tapped the table, and soon, magical projections of all the challenges appeared in front of everyone.

"You chose him as a Singing King?" Professor Arienna looked at Doh, Reh, Mii, Fah, and Sue in disbelief. "What were you girls thinking? I've personally heard Alex sing, and that kind of singing should be buried from the face of this world!"

Sue chuckled because she had the same opinion as Professor Arienna. However, what was done was done.

"You think this is funny?" Professor Arienna glared at Sue. "You already know that the top Ranker in the Seventh Training Room will represent us in the inter-academy singing competition. Do you know what kind of calamity will happen if you send Alex there to sing?!"

The five fairies glanced at each other before they all giggled at the same time.

"I am looking forward to seeing that happen," Doh replied.

"Imagine seeing tens of thousands of people foaming at the mouth at the same time!" Reh sighed. "Priceless."

Mii giggled. "I'm sure Alex will get a standing ovation. He might even get hit by eggs and tomatoes. I'd love to see that!"

"Girls, take this seriously," Fah said calmly. "I mean, sending Alex there to sing is definitely a bad idea. But there is one thing that you are forgetting, Professor Arienna."

"And that is?" Professor Arienna arched an eyebrow.

"There is just a thin line between being tone deaf and a singing genius," Fah stated. "Right now, Alex is an unpolished gem. But if he is taught properly, just imagine how destructive his singing talent will be. I'm not talking about a talent that can wake up the dead. No, it will be akin to the deities descending upon the world to sing for all mortals."

The fairies wondered what kind of weed Fah had smoked since it couldn't have been the words of anyone sober. But for some reason, they were half-convinced that there might be some logic to what she was saying.

"The only time Alex will be permitted to participate in a singing competition is when he doesn't sing!" Professor Arienna insisted.

“You should all fix the rankings and make sure this doesn’t happen again! I can tell the Headmaster that the magical database experienced a system error, which caused Alex’s Ranking to beat the other records.”

The fairies glanced at each other before shaking their heads firmly.

“We won’t ever let that happen,” Doh said as if her life depended on it. “The moment Alex’s rank changes, he will come back to challenge it once again.”

“Sis, we don’t want to undergo therapy,” Reh commented. “Also, it’s not only us who have bent their rules for Alex. Are you forgetting something, Professor? You also experienced Alex’s singing talent.”

Mii sneered. “We heard that you forcefully kicked him out of the Trial of Music because you didn’t want to hear him sing again. Tell me, if you were one of the judges of the training room, and you know Alex wouldn’t stop to challenge you until he gets the top spot, what would you do?”

Professor Arienna and her teaching assistant shuddered uncontrollably. They couldn’t find any words to refute—that painted image was simply a tragedy.

Anyone could take the challenges in the Seventh Training Room.

Students were permitted to challenge them over and over and over again if they wanted to.

If the fairies were to face Alex, heavens know how many times, wouldn’t they suffer PTSD and never recover?

If Professor Arienna were to face Alex every day, wouldn’t she start hating music for the rest of her life?

“Oh, I know!” Melodina chuckled. “How about we let Professor Arienna fight Alex in the Battle Choir at least once? If you agree, then we will do as you say and remove his name from the Rankings.”

“Hahahaha!” Mii laughed. “That’s a good idea!”

The other Fairies, whom Alex had challenged, were Lah, Tee, Dew, Lyra, Cello, Zithra, Harpa, Clarina, Fluta, and Picca. At that moment, they unanimously voiced their agreement.

Professor Arienna hesitated for a bit if she should take up their offer.

"If I win against him in the Battle Choir, will you agree to fix the rankings?" Professor Arienna asked to confirm that the fairies were serious.

""Yes!""

The fairies all replied in unison and were even looking at the professor with devilish smiles on their faces.

Clearly, they wanted to see how the head of the Music Department, Professor Arienna would survive a Battle Choir against Alex.

The Professor's teaching assistant looked anxiously at the beautiful lady, who had pursued music with a passion.

If she were to lose against Alex in Battle Choir, it might affect her views about her profession.

"P-Professor, I think this is a bad idea," the teaching assistant commented. "Just look at the fairies. They seem so confident that you have no chance of winning against Alex."

"Heather, sometimes, one must take risks in order to set things right," Professor Arienna replied. "Very well. I will personally send an invitation to Alex and challenge him in the Battle Choir."

"Do you want to make it public?" Melodina asked with sparkling eyes. "The more people, the better, right?"

“Yes! The more victims—errr, viewers the better!” Sue nodded in agreement. “This will also cement Alex’s legend in the academy.”

“No.” Professor Arienna shook her head. “It will just be you girls spectating the battle. No one else will be allowed to see.”

“”Boooo!””

The fairies who were now addicted to seeing the suffering of others complained, but Professor Arienna was firm and didn’t listen to their opposition.

She didn’t want Frieden Academy to be the laughing stock of the academy, so even if there was a risk, she would take it without fail.

Doh, Reh, Mii, Fah, Sue, and Melodina all laughed internally.

They hoped that Alex once again summoned a horde of geese, then trample on the pride and dignity of the Music Professor who thought that she had what it took to face the new Singing King of Frieden Academy.

‘Am I really going to do this?’ Professor Arienna thought as she walked towards the Ironheart Academy. ‘With the Inter-Class Battle Royale happening soon, Alex might decline my challenge.’

The Music Professor could still remember the sweet smiles that the fairies gave her before she left the Music Room in order to talk to Alex.

Those were the smiles of the survivors of Alex’s singing, and frankly, Professor Arienna was a little unnerved by their smug expressions.

Still, she had already declared that she would go and talk to Alex.

'Maybe I can convince him to step down by compensating him with academy points,' Professor Arienna thought. 'That should be for the best.'

After pondering for a while, she also thought that it would be unfair for Alex if he didn't get anything in return for having his ranks in the Seventh Training Room stripped away from him.

Just as she was nearing the Ironheart Dormitory he saw the Doom Cow, Daisy, patrolling the area, with Dim Dim perched on top of her head.

Seeing the little white bun, who was also a good singer, Professor Arienna smiled and greeted it.

"Hello, Dim Dim!" Professor Arienna said with a smile.

"Dim Dim!" Dim Dim also greeted the professor with a smile.

Daisy stopped walking and glanced at the direction of the Professor. Although this was her first time seeing Professor Arienna, Daisy didn't do anything and simply remembered her name and face.

"Where is Alex?" Professor Arienna asked.

"Dim!" Dim Dim pointed at the Ironheart Dormitory.

"Thank you," Professor Arienna replied. "Were you with Alex when he went to the Seventh Training Room to do the challenges?"

Dim Dim blinked before it averted its gaze and started to whistle.

Seeing the little bun's reaction, the beautiful lady couldn't help but giggle due to how cute it was.

"Dim Dim, is Alex a good singer?" Professor Arienna asked.

Dim Dim continued to whistle. Clearly, it didn't plan on answering this question.

In the end, Professor Arienna decided to cut the little bun some slack and bid it goodbye.

'Even Dim Dim doesn't have any confidence in Alex's singing voice.' Professor Arienna smirked. 'But the problem is Alex. He really believes that he's a good singer, which is the problem. Does he even hear his singing voice when he sings?'

This was the one thing that perplexed Professor Arienna.

Usually, when people sing, they might not be able to accurately hear what they sound like, but they would at least be able to tell if they sound good or bad.

But Alex was a special breed.

There were no signs that implied that he felt that his singing was bad.

It was either that he genuinely didn't know how bad his singing voice was, or he really thought that he was a good singer.

'Well, it doesn't matter,' Professor Arienna thought. 'I just need to beat him in the Battle Choir and fix the mess he created.'

With the confidence of being the Music Professor of Frieden Academy for nearly a decade, Professor Arienna entered the Ironheart Dormitory to look for the young man who was currently taking a nap inside his room.

Chapter 213: Your Song, Your Beats

"Excuse me," Professor Arienna stopped the first person she saw in the dormitory's common room. "Can you tell me the room number of Alex Stratos?"

Coincidentally, the person she asked was not only Alex's friend but also the Dorm Leader of the First Years—Nessia.

"Alex?" Nessia blinked a couple of times after hearing the Music Professor name the young man. "He's in room number 13. Did Alex do something bad, Professor?"

"Oh, no. I just want to talk to him about something important," Professor Arienna said. She couldn't possibly admit that she had come to personally challenge the reigning Singing King and force him to relinquish his throne.

When she arrived at Alex's room, the professor knocked twice and waited for an answer.

She didn't have to wait long. A moment later, the door opened, and a handsome young man with short red hair and bright red eyes appeared before her.

"Hello, Professor Arienna," Chuck, who immediately recognized the visitor, greeted her politely. "I swear I wasn't the one that broke the violin in the music room!"

"Hello, Mr. Rizz," Professor Arienna replied. "And I know that you're not the one who did it."

Chuck was one of the students in the Music Class, so he was no stranger to her.

"Is Alex Stratos here?" Professor Arienna asked directly, unwilling to spend any time on small talk.

"He is." Chuck nodded. "But he is currently napping. Should I wake him up?"

"Yes, please." Professor Arienna smiled faintly. "I have a very important matter to discuss with him."

Chuck didn't hesitate to shake his roommate silly until the latter woke up from his slumber.

"Is it dinner time already?" Alex asked after opening his eyes.

“Not yet,” Chuck answered. “Professor Arienna is looking for you.”

“Professor Arienna?” Alex was still half-asleep, so it took him a while to put a face to the name.

When he finally remembered who Professor Arienna was, he propped himself up from the bed and looked at the Professor, now seated in the chair facing him.

“Chuck, can you leave Alex and me for a while?” Professor Arienna requested. “I need to talk to him in private.”

“Of course, Professor,” Chuck agreed easily, but not before giving his roommate a light pat on the shoulder to wish him good luck for the upcoming conversation.

After Chuck left the room, Professor Arienna stared at Alex, who stared back at her.

The two held each other’s gaze for nearly a minute before the young man coughed lightly.

“Professor, I know I am good-looking,” Alex said with an awkward but polite smile. “But if you keep looking at me like this, even I will feel embarrassed.”

The young man’s attempt to ease the tension worked, eliciting a soft laugh from the Music Professor.

“Indeed. When it comes to good looks, you have what it takes to be a performer,” Professor Arienna commented. “Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for your singing.”

Alex arched an eyebrow. The Music Professor’s words implied that his singing skills were lacking.

However, his head bloated from the fact that he had just become the top ranker of all the challenges in the Seventh Training Room, he simply smiled and wholeheartedly believed that the Professor must be teasing him.

"I'm sure you came to see me for something important, Professor," Alex stated. "How about we talk about that first?"

Professor Arienna nodded. "You're right, Alex. The reason I came here is to ask you to step down from the top rankings of the Seventh Training Room.

"Of course, I'm not asking you to do it for free. I will compensate you with academy points. How does five thousand points for each challenge sound? It's not a bad deal, right?"

Alex frowned. This wasn't a topic he'd expect to discuss as soon as he woke up.

"I'm sorry, Professor," Alex answered. "While academy points are good, I'm good with what I have now."

"So you are after glory after all." Professor Arienna sighed. "But, you see, as the Head of the Musical Department, I cannot allow you to keep your rankings in the Seventh Training Room. Doing so will tarnish our reputation."

"Tarnish your reputation?" Alex tilted his head in confusion. "What do you mean by that, Professor?"

"I'll be honest, Alex. You're not cut out for singing." Professor Arienna shook her head. "The top ranker of each year will represent the academy in the inter-academy singing competition. I cannot allow you to participate in it, for it will make Frieden Academy the laughing stock of the continent."

"I see." Alex nodded. "So, Professor, what you're saying is that I still have a lot to learn when it comes to singing, right?"

"Well, you can put it that way." Professor Arienna didn't want to sound too harsh, so she decided to approach this matter gently. "Alex, it is my opinion as a Professor and a professional that you just don't have what it takes to represent Frieden Academy."

Alex didn't reply right away. He simply tried to recall any information about the Inter-Academy Singing Competition, as well as the prizes that could be won in that tournament.

Since Astrea was one of his Queens, he had accompanied her to the singing competition many times. As such, it didn't take long for him to remember the prizes that competitors stood to gain.

After remembering that he could get a Legendary Item as one of the prizes in the competition, Alex only grew more determined to participate in it.

"I'm sorry, Professor, but I think I am qualified to represent the academy," Alex said with pride. "After all, I am currently the Singing King."

The corner of Professor Arienna's lips twitched.

She was very tempted to tell Alex that the only reason the fairies awarded him that title was because they didn't want to suffer anymore.

They didn't want to go to therapy, nor did they want to suffer PTSD for the rest of their lives.

Even she had to admit—if she also had to listen to Alex's singing everyday, she would start hating music even though it was her only passion.

The Professor had already expected this outcome, so she initiated her backup plan.

"Very well. Prove to me that you have what it takes to represent Frieden Academy in the competition," Professor Arienna said. "Fight me in the Battle Choir. If you win, I will no longer pursue this matter. However, if you lose, you will relinquish your titles and no longer enter the Seventh Training Room to challenge it again."

Just as Alex was about to reply, he heard a notification sound in his head before a window screen appeared in front of him.

— — —

< Hidden Quest Unlocked! >

Mission Name: Your Song, Your Beats.

Objective: Defeat Professor Arienna in the Battle Choir!

Rewards: 5,000 Arcana Points.

— — —

“Deal!” Alex replied as soon as he finished reading the information that was presented to him.

Right now, what he really needed wasn’t Academy Points but Arcana Points.

He needed to buy the Multitask Skill Book as soon as possible as it would help him greatly in the upcoming Battle Royale.

Since an opportunity had presented itself to him, the young man no longer hesitated and accepted the Professor’s Challenge, which made the beautiful woman grin.

“At least you have the spirit to compete against me.” Professor Arienna now had a more favorable impression of Alex.

She had thought that the young man would refuse her challenge out of the fear of losing.

But seeing the excitement on his face, it seemed that she had just been overthinking things.

“Since a special event will happen several weeks from now, we need to settle this as soon as possible,” Professor Arienna added. “How about we meet at the Seventh Training Room tomorrow, four in the afternoon? Does that time work for you?”

“Yes.” Alex nodded.

“Good.” Professor Arienna stood up and extended her hand to Alex. “I look forward to our battle.”

The young man also reached out to shake the Professor’s hand, smiling confidently. He couldn’t wait to get his prize after clearing his hidden quest!

In his ears, he was the best singer he had ever heard. Winning against even a Professor was more or less automatic.

Both smiled at each other, assured of themselves.

But only one of them would survive in a battle that would decide the fate of the academy in the Inter-Academy Singing Competition that would take place five months from now.

Chapter 214: Make Way For The Singing King!

“Alex, are you in peak condition right now?” Doh asked. “I brought you some Spring Dew. This will help clear your throat, so you can sing properly.”

“Do you want a head massage?” Reh inquired, but she was already massaging Alex’s head with her small hands. “I’m good, right? This will help you have clear thoughts that will last for hours.”

“Have you eaten properly?” Mii smiled. “If not, wait for me. Just for you, I’ll go to the cafeteria and ask for the Performer’s Course. It is filling, but also light on the stomach, so it won’t hinder your ability to sing.”

“Girls, can you keep it down for a bit?” Fah frowned while she rubbed Dim Dim’s head, making the little bun sigh in pleasure. “Class is still in session. We are disturbing the Professor.”

“She’s right, you know?” Sue commented. “Ah, Alex, you don’t have to take notes. I’ll do it for you.”

With a wave of her hand, the pen on Alex’s hands started to write on its own. He let go of it in surprise and watched as it practically danced on his notebook, jotting down the lesson contents.

Melodina didn’t say anything and simply used a fan to cool Alex. The young man couldn’t help but wonder why the fairies were giving him the VIP treatment.

In fact, Alex was not the only one wondering about it.

All of his peers in the History Class were looking at him weirdly.

Professor Arabella, who was Class C’s homeroom teacher, didn’t know if she should be amused or concerned that one of her students was being fussed over by the Fairies of the Seventh Training Room, who were all known to be very strict and harsh to students.

In the end, she decided to not let the young man, who was currently the centre of attention, bother her and continued her class as usual.

Wherever Alex went, the six fairies accompanied him, as if they were his personal maids who were all very, very eager to make him feel at ease.

However, after a few hours, Alex finally asked them what was going on. As much as he was thankful for their all-around assistance, he could no longer endure the stares of his schoolmates. From their expressions, he could tell that everyone was already thinking of the worst—for example, some must be thinking that he had blackmailed the fairies into waiting on him, hand and foot.

“Okay, we will come clean,” Doh replied. “You are going to fight Professor Arienna in the Battle Choir after classes end, right?”

“Right.”

“Then, we have a favor to ask,” Reh said as she lightly patted Alex’s cheek. “Before you fight her, can you add a condition? Like—if you win, she will raise our salaries.

“You see, we have been working hard for many years, but our salary is still the same,” Mii complained. “The cost of living has increased over the years. We asked her to raise our salaries, but she didn’t agree to it!”

Sue nodded. “The cost of therapy has also increased, but the risks of emotional damage and trauma have only gotten bigger! People think this job is easy, but it is dangerous enough that we deserve hazard pay!”

Melodina smirked. “So make sure you win, okay? And don’t forget to add our request to the conditions before the battle starts.”

The young man finally understood why the fairies were being extra nice to him. However, what he didn’t know was that the fairies had a second agenda.

They were making sure that Alex was in top condition before he fought Professor Arienna, so their raise would be guaranteed!

The fairies were looking forward to the Battle Choir. If not for the Professor’s insistence that the duel be kept private, they would have already started selling tickets throughout the academy!

Melodina even planned to open a betting stall for it. By putting the odds in the Professor’s favor, the students would be tricked into betting on the Professor.

All that was left for the Fairies to do was wait to make a killing when Alex won the challenge. What a very beautiful painting! A pay raise and an extra income.

Dim Dim, amused with the fairies, was half-tempted to spectate the battle.

In fact, the Dim Sum God was already casually browsing the Arcana Shop to search for earmuffs that could prevent emotional and psychological damage from affecting the wearer.

The Dim Sum God also had the same Arcana Points as Alex. So, the more points the young man had, the more points it had.

Soon, classes ended and Alex made his way towards the Seventh Training Room.

The moment he, Dim Dim, and the Fairies appeared, all students who were loitering in the training room looked at him.

Astrea, who had also been the talk of the academy because of her appearance in Alex's Battle Choir, was also there.

The Professor had allowed her to watch the music video and asked her to memorize the song, so she could sing it for the Inter-Academy Singing Competition.

When she had first heard the song, Astrea felt as if she had been electrocuted.

Overwhelmed with emotions, she instinctively felt that this song was made for her.

As she now gazed at the young man, who had manifested her image to sing it in the Battle Choir, she felt slightly complicated.

This wasn't the first time she met Alex.

She had accidentally pushed him into the wrong portal during the Class Allocation Trials, not once, but twice.

She felt very apologetic about it because she believed that it had affected Alex's Class Rankings.

Although she looked down on commoners because she was part of the Lionheart Club, she was also someone who didn't shirk away from responsibility and knew when to apologize when it was needed.

“Make way for the Singing King!” Doh declared. “Make way for the King of Songs!”

Reh and Mii had procured magic flower petals and were now raining them down wherever Alex walked. It was as if he were truly a royal who was gracing everyone with his presence.

Professor Arienna, who was chatting with her teaching assistant, couldn’t help but gawk at the sight of the young man wearing a golden olive crown.

Dim Dim had also put on a bandana, with a leaf between its mouth.

It looked like a little gangster who was preparing to participate in a gang fight with a sentient macaron or a talking cookie. The young ladies nearby giggled when they saw the cute little bun.

Alex then arrived in front of Professor Arienna before giving her a respectful bow.

“Alex Stratos has come to challenge Professor Arienna in the Battle Choir,” Alex announced, prompting the students in the Seventh Training to start murmuring to each other.

This was part of the Fairies’ plan to let the other students know, since they had no intention of letting Professor Arienna keep the details of the battle hidden!

“You...” Professor Arienna was very tempted to ask Alex if he was in his right state of mind or perhaps under the effect of some kind of spell.

But she decided that it wasn’t important at the moment.

The gazes of the students—some of whom were inviting their friends to the Seventh Training Room—were starting to get on her nerves.

“Follow me,” Professor Arienna ordered as she opened the door of the training room.

“Can Dim Dim enter with me?” Alex asked.

The Professor then looked at the Dim Sum God, who was shaking its head furiously.

Professor Arienna couldn’t help but giggle before nodding in agreement. “Of course, Dim Dim can come. In fact, all the Fairies will come as well.”

The Fairies didn’t even flinch as they followed Alex. They even grabbed onto the Dim Sum God, who had a change of heart and wanted to flee while it still could.

Unfortunately for the little guy, the fairies had no intention of letting it escape.

“Dim Dim, let’s suffer together,” Doh said with a smile.

“We are now in the fifth state of grief—acceptance,” Reh commented. “Don’t worry, buddy. You will soon reach that phase too.”

“As fellow sufferers, you don’t have to worry,” Mii seized the struggling Dim Sum God, preventing it from escaping. “We will be there with you.”

Soon, the door of the training room closed, leaving the students behind to wonder what would happen next.

Chapter 215: Voice Of The End [Part 1]

It had been a long time since Professor Arienna last entered a training room to do a challenge herself.

In fact, the last time she did, she was still a student at the academy.

She was now a Professor and the head of the Music Department to boot.

The Battle Choir Challenge had many stages—the amphitheater, the colosseum, a deserted island, on top of a mountain... The list went on and on.

It really depended on the master of the domain, whom the challenger would challenge.

“Let’s do it like this,” Professor Arienna said as she looked around the plain white world, where nothing existed. “I will be the challenger, and you will be the owner of this domain. I will let you choose the battlefield.”

“Interesting.” Alex raised his eyebrows in surprise. He had assumed that he would be the challenger. “I’ll take you up on that offer, professor.”

An orb flew toward Alex, and he grabbed it. Soon, the domain transformed into an indoor stadium, decorated like a concert hall familiar to him.

A moment later, everyone saw something that made their eyes widen in shock.

They were inside an open-air colosseum, surrounded by tens of thousands of people who were all cheering them on.

But this colosseum was quite different from the other stages that Professor Arienna had seen in the past.

They were currently standing on a magical floating arena under a starry sky.

Spotlights crisscrossed the arena, cutting through the air with sharp beams of light. Even the floor glowed with vivid shapes and colors, as if to highlight the ones standing atop it.

The audience all held blue glow sticks that shone within the darkness, setting up the mood for the battle.

“This...” Professor Arienna couldn’t help but gawk at this incredible scene. She had never seen anything quite like this before.

Professor Arienna’s teaching assistant, the fairies, and Dim Dim found themselves on top of a floating platform that hovered around the arena. Like the other spectators, they were now also holding glow sticks.

After taking in the sights of the battlefield, Professor Arienna smiled.

“I think we should create something like this for our cultural festival,” Professor Arienna said. “I’m sure it will be a hit.”

“Great,” Alex replied. “I’m looking forward to it, Professor.”

As if on cue, two orbs flew towards both of them, indicating that it was now time for them to start their Battle Choir.

“Alex, I won’t be holding back,” Professor Arienna declared. “I’m doing this for the honor of the Music Department, so don’t hate me after this, okay?”

“I won’t, Professor,” Alex promised. “Let’s dance.”

Both combatants seized their respective orbs and channelled the song that they wanted to play.

Suddenly, the familiar opening of the musical masterpiece Canon in D by Pachelbel started to play from Professor Arienna’s side.

It was a song famous for its perfect simplicity that allowed it to be played continuously.

However, Professor Arienna added her own twist to it by infusing it with a vivacity that made it sound like it was truly meant for battle.

Holding a magical guitar in her hand, Professor Arienna demonstrated why she was the Head Professor of the Musical Department.

Countless musical notes flew towards Alex like missiles as her teaching assistant and the fairies waved their magical glow sticks to cheer for her.

On the other hand, Dim Dim smirked as it held two glow sticks and performed the glow stick dance to support Alex.

Suddenly, a music that was very different from the Professor's lively and upbeat performance emerged from Alex's side of the arena.

The young man had summoned a full orchestra. Dim lights softly veiled them, perfectly matching the mood of his song, Music of the Night.

"Night time sharpens, heightens each sensation.

Darkness stirs and wakes imagination.

Silently the senses abandon their defenses..."

The young man's voice was equally memorable, but in a different way. It spread through the colosseum like a plague, slowly but steadily stripping the will to live from the audience.

The beautifully haunting song retained its horror feels, but with a big change in its core. The original version would make one feel like a beautiful ghost was after their soul, gently coaxing them to give it up.

But Alex's version...

It was pure horror. The kind where the protagonist would run and run and run for hours while screaming their lungs out, snot and tears dripping on the floor, but the ugly, deformed ghost would still be energetically running after them with a bloodied machete.

The teaching assistant, the fairies, and Dim Dim all shuddered uncontrollably as Alex shrieked like a banshee that had stubbed its toe on a Lego brick.

Somewhere in the distance, glass cracked, and a pitiful flock of birds plummeted from the sky, never to feel the wind under their wings again.

The lights on the arena flickered. Countless glow sticks fell to the ground as their owners started convulsing after hearing the haunting tone of the phantom himself, singing passionately.

It was as if a broken trumpet had mated with a haunted accordion, and their child had learned to scream operatic ballads while being throttled by a goose mid-honk.

Every note wobbled between keys like a drunken tightrope walker trying to do ballet.

The orchestra tried to keep up diligently, valiantly, even desperately. But professionalism could only get them so far. Several violinists looked visibly pale.

One flutist wept silently.

But Alex sang on with unwavering passion, eyes ablaze with emotion.

He reached out with trembling fingers, trying to channel the Phantom's allure, the seduction of shadows, and the music of dreams.

The flying magical notes that had shot in his direction like missiles were intercepted by dark notes, resulting in magical explosions.

One of Professor Arienna's guitar strings snapped because she had strummed it too hard after hearing Alex's impassioned singing voice, a voice she wished she could forget.

Gritting her teeth to stop herself from losing consciousness, she bravely continued to play. This time, the lights around her shone so brightly that the magical notes turned into magical comets, imbued with the power to fight evil!

Alex, on the other hand, was now lost in his singing, oblivious to the Professor's determination to beat him in this musical battle.

"Let your mind start a journey through a strange new world

Leave all thoughts of the life you knew before

Let your soul take you where you long to be!"

"Only then... can you beloooooong to MEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE—!!"

The sound that erupted was not of this world.

The machete of the ugly, deformed ghost had certainly stabbed through the protagonist's ears. As for the soul... it was gone.

Alex's note was so high, so flat, so unstable, and so shrill that several nearby glow sticks crumbled, coating the fairies' hands in glow-in-the-dark dust.

Dim Dim simply stared into emptiness.

[E/N: And if you gaze long into an abyss, the abyss also gazes into you.]

Sue lightly waved her hand in front of the little bun's eyes. She couldn't get a reaction, so she assumed that Dim Dim had already fainted just a few seconds ago and that the shock had simply caused it to forget about closing its eyes.

The flying comets met dark meteors, resulting in violent collisions that turned the starry skies into a war zone.

Professor Arienna staggered back, sweat dripping down her face.

Alex's voice was so overwhelming that another string of her guitar broke.

The stinging pain from the guitar string hitting her arm snapped her out of her daze, allowing her to regain some semblance of clarity.

It was at that moment when she saw countless evil spirits flying towards her, each intending to drag her into the pits of suffering that they called home.

Their faces were twisted in agony.

Their mouths hung open in silent screams.

One of them even held up a sign that read: "JOIN US, PROFESSOR. IT'S QUIET DOWN HERE!"

"No... I refuse..." Professor Arienna gritted her teeth as she raised her guitar and strummed a defiant chord.

A golden shockwave erupted from her, blasting the phantoms back into the abyss from whence they crawled out of.

The shattered strings of her guitar mended briefly through sheer musical willpower as her aura flared with raw, elegant fury.

She refused to bend her knees and lose in the competition where the pride of the Academy, as well as the Music Department, were at stake.

Chapter 216: Voice Of The End [Part 2]

“I’m the Head of the Music Department!” Professor Arienna roared. “I will not be defeated by a student whose voice sounds like nails scratching a chalkboard!”

But Alex couldn’t hear her at all.

He had ascended.

His arms were spread wide. His shirt fluttered with the breeze. His eyes were glowing—not with power but with pure, unchecked delusion.

“Let the dream begin, let the darker side give in

To the power of the music that I write

The power of the music of the night!

You alone can make my song take flight

Help me make the music of the Niiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiight!”

Several members of the audience were now clinging to each other as they cried softly.

The teaching assistant, Heather, had gone into the fetal position and was humming a lullaby to herself.

When Alex sang the final verse, a ripple of death energy—it’s every bit as soul-sucking as “death energy” could be—blasted across the arena.

Magical barriers cracked.

The orchestra disintegrated.

The audience clutched their heads.

The arena lights blinked wildly, as if possessed.

One by one, the glow sticks of the audience fizzled out, not because their magic had faded, but because they couldn't bear to illuminate the scene anymore.

The stars above them jittered like faulty pixels.

The constellations themselves tried to realign into a giant 'MUTE' button.

Professor Arienna fell to one knee, panting heavily, her hair singed at the tips.

Her guitar hung limply from her bleeding fingers. All of its strings had snapped, unable to fight something that wasn't possible to defeat.

Her ears were ringing.

Her soul felt personally offended.

She was starting to wonder why she had even tried to challenge Alex in the Battle Choir.

"It was a mistake," Professor Arienna muttered as if she had lost not just a battle but her soul.

Alex, meanwhile, turned slowly to the stunned crowd with a triumphant, completely delusional smile.

"Did you feel it?" Alex asked dramatically as he placed right hand over his heart. "The beauty... the darkness... the music of the night!"

He spread his arms.

Silence.

What beauty? There was no beauty. The only imagery they saw was suffering... with lots of burning garbage. Music? There was no music. It was just the sound effect of some inexplicable force tearing their soul apart like paper.

Dim Dim, eyes still blank, held up a cardboard sign mechanically.

"Please stop, Alex."

Sue wiped her cheeks to get rid of the glowing dust from her broken glow stick and spoke sadly.

"We lost Heather."

They turned toward the teaching assistant who was still curled up and humming to herself.

"... Do teaching assistants get free therapy these days?" Melodina remembered to ask.

Although the fairies were shaken, their resistance to Alex's singing had drastically increased after hearing him sing over and over again.

They were the true survivors of this tragedy and would live to see the sunrise the next day.

Everyone else was devastated. Even the domain itself seemed to be trembling, overwhelmed by Alex's singing.

Soon, the scenery returned to that white world, where nothing existed except the participants of the Battle Royale.

A moment later, Alex heard a notification sound and a blue window screen appeared in front of him.

— — —

< You Have Completed A Hidden Quest! >

Mission Name: Your Song, Your Beats

Objective: Beat Professor Arienna in the Battle Choir!

Rewards:

– 5,000 Arcana Points

– Bonus: Divine Attention Acquired

Note: The Tone Deaf God is very satisfied with your performance. He has given you the skill, Voice of the End.

— — —

[Voice of the End]

“He sang so off-key that the universe gave him a weapon.” – Tone Deaf God, Patron of Musical Mayhem.

Skill Grade: Divine Active Skill

— Unleash a sonic blast of catastrophic disharmony. Can cause confusion, dizziness, spiritual trauma, and spontaneous existential crises to all who hear it within a 50-meter radius.

— Ignore all Defenses.

— Barriers will not protect anyone from this sh*t—err, skill.

— Friendly fire is an inevitable side effect of using this skill.

Cooldown: 5 minutes.

Note: Use with caution. Effects may include shattered friendships, exorcised spirits, collapsed structures, and irreparable psychological damage.

— — —

Alex blinked. "...Voice of the End?"

He didn't expect that he would receive some kind of debuff skill that would be useful against many enemies at the same time.

The only problem was that it caused friendly fire, which made him realize that he couldn't use it when he was fighting alongside others.

Professor Arienna finally stood up from her reverie, brushing herself off.

"...Alex." The Professor walked towards the young man and rested her hand on his shoulder.

"Y-Yes, Professor?" Alex asked, slightly unnerved. The Professor's tone was mild, but her grip was vice-like and her eyes were cold with thinly-veiled killing intent.

“There is a Battle Choir competition in the Inter-Class Battles, I want you to represent us there.” Professor Arienna, who now fully understood Alex’s musical prowess, chuckled soullessly, as if she couldn’t wait for others to experience the same suffering that she did.

She then went toward Heather, who was still rocking herself gently while in fetal position. The psychological damage had caused the teaching student to mentally regress to childhood.

Professor Arienna helped her drink a rejuvenation potion before drinking one herself.

She was absolutely drained after her battle with Alex.

However, one thing was now clearer than ever. She was convinced that Frieden Academy would emerge victorious during the Inter-Academy Singing Competition. At the very least, the Battle Choir contest was a guaranteed win.

As for the Singing King and Queen contests, there was still time to remedy this problem.

Astrea would be representing the ladies division. But there was no way in hell Professor Arienna would allow Alex to represent them in the singing competition.

She would definitely find a replacement at the last minute, by hook or by crook.

Dim Dim, who had been in a daze since the first line of Alex’s performance, blinked once then twice as it finally regained its consciousness.

It then looked around and found itself in the white room, which made it believe that the challenge was now over.

Dim Dim was having a hard time remembering what had happened. It was as if its brain had, in a bid to protect itself, automatically deleted all the traumatic experiences.

Since that was the case, the little bun jumped on top of Alex's head and congratulated him for winning against the Professor in the Battle Choir.

"Thanks, Dim Dim," Alex replied. "Did you like my performance?"

"... Dim!"

"Um? Is it just me, or was there a delay in your reply?"

"Dim!"

"It's just my imagination?"

"Dim!"

Alex chuckled before leaving the training room triumphantly.

He had left the Professor and the Fairies behind after saying his goodbyes because they seemed to have something very important to discuss.

As he appeared in the lobby of the Seventh Training Room, all eyes locked on him, including Astrea's.

The students had tried to watch the Battle Choir between Alex and Professor Arienna, but they had been denied access.

This meant that the Professor had used her authority as the manager of the Seventh Training Room to prevent anyone from seeing their battle.

"Who won?" one of the students asked.

This was the question that was on everyone's mind.

They had already recognized Alex as the current top ranker in the Seventh Training Room, so waiting for the results of his battle with the Professor had left everyone on the edge.

Seeing that Astrea was also looking at him, the young man lightly patted his chest and looked at everyone with pride.

"I won," Alex declared with confidence.

He then flipped his hair like a shampoo model before walking away like a winner in life.

Astrea watched him retreating back, wondering how the young man was able to defeat Professor Arienna, whom she respected the most in the academy.

Chapter 217: Do You Think He's A Prodigy?

Student Council Room...

The student council wasn't just a symbol of authority among the students. They were part of the core that ensured the academy's structure and stability.

Beyond enforcing rules and regulations, its members were responsible for planning and executing major events, such as the cultural festival. Not to mention, they had a variety of tasks far beyond just that.

From handling inter-club disputes to overseeing emergency protocols, the council's decisions shaped student life on every level.

That said, they had eyes and ears all over the academy. For every information they learn, they would adjust accordingly as soon as possible.

And today was one of their regular weekly meetings, where they discussed relevant news from the past few days.

“It seems the person who saved you is really special, Lucius,” Theo said with a smile. “Lately, he had been the topic of discussion, especially after he became the top Ranker of the challenges in the Seventh Training Room. Yesterday, he even managed to beat Professor Arienna in the Battle Choir.

“According to my sources, it was the professor who went to challenge Alex. And yet, she still lost. Can I hear your thoughts about this incident?”

Lucius was the adopted son of Professor Gareth. He was the same young man Alex had saved from the Chrono Maze.

Since it was an important matter that concerned a Demon Worshiper, Lucius had no choice but to report the incident to the student council president.

“Alex is... a very mysterious person,” Lucius replied. “I don’t know what he is thinking, but I can guarantee that his skills are the real deal.”

Theo rested his chin over the back of his intertwined hands as he focused his attention on the young man who still had more things to say.

“Frankly, I’m not too surprised that he won against Professor Arienna,” Lucius added. “He just has that sense of confidence that only prodigies have.”

Not only did the Treasurer of the Student Council owe his life to Alex, but he had also experienced fighting alongside the young man.

The Chrono Maze had become the graveyard of countless souls, and yet, when Alex was there, he treated the place as if it were his own backyard.

He even went as far as to farm magic crystals, as if he were just going to a farm to pick some cabbages.

“Do you think he is a prodigy?” Cassandra asked.

“Do you even need to ask?” Lucius shrugged. “The records in the Seventh Training Room and Professor Arienna’s defeat are more than enough proof to support that claim.”

The other members of the student council nodded in agreement because only a prodigy could do such a thing.

However, Alex was only a Rank 2 Oathkeeper. Frankly, it was nothing compared to some of the First Years who already reached Rank 3 and Rank 4 in their respective job classes.

“His club members have also shown great potential,” the Sergeant of Arms of the Student Council, Dante Krev, commented with a grin. “I was even planning to scout that First Year, Renard Vale, to become my successor, but he refused and told me that he doesn’t trust me, even though I told him I’m a member of the student council.”

A hearty and loud laugh escaped his lips, as if he found the person who rejected him to be quite a cute junior.

Dante was in his third year and stood at a commanding height of six foot and five inches.

He was broad-shouldered and had a muscular frame. Although he wasn’t ugly, he was simply too buff and looked imposing, more than enough to make babies cry at a single sight.

As such, no one was more fitting than him to become the man who upheld the rules of the student council through brute strength, punches, and kicks.

His sharp features, bronze-toned skin, and tongue that didn’t mind hurling profanities had made the students admire and fear him at the same time.

He also goes by the nickname Iron Hound due to his tendency to go crazy like a mad dog whenever he is triggered into a rampage.

“Well, let’s put aside Endless Horizon for now,” Theo stated. “Dante, Cassandra, how is the progress of the preparation for the Inter-Class Battle Royale. Both of you said that it will be very different from the one that happened last year, correct?”

“Of course, it’s different!” Dante replied with a devilish smile on his face. “We made sure that it would be harder, so we reduced the limit of survivors to only ten people.”

Each class had forty students max, and since the First Years were composed of Class F up to Class A, there were a total of nearly three hundred students participating in the Battle Royale.

“What about Class F?” Theo asked. “Did you see anyone with potential?”

Class F was filled with the lowest-ranked students in the academy, and their numbers were lower compared to the other classes.

Currently, Class F only had twenty people. Their classes were handled by “special teachers” who were deemed skillful enough to handle them.

They rarely had the opportunity to share activities with the other classes since they were practically the “problem children” of the academy.

However, the students of Class F still had a chance at redemption.

Those who showed exceptional promise could transfer to another class—any except Class A—once they proved themselves worthy.

The Battle Royale was one such opportunity, a special event where Class F students could catch the professors’ attention and earn the chance to change classes.

“Well, two people caught my eye,” Dante replied. “However, I would like to see their abilities more in this upcoming Battle Royale.”

“Two people?” Theo arched an eyebrow. “Their names?”

“Evangeline Feylune, and Vaan Damne,” Dante answered.

“Ah.. Those two.” Theo nodded in understanding.

As the student council president, it was his duty to check if any of the First Years were worth training as future student council members.

The two names that Dante had mentioned truly had potential but were too stubborn to follow the rules of the academy.

‘They might have also purposely failed their Class Allocation Rankings, so they will be sent to Class F,’ Theo thought.

There were some students who wanted to make a grand entrance in the annual Battle Royale to show their prowess, and the jump from Class F to a higher class was part of this grand entrance to the academy life.

“Just remember, I don’t want any problems happening in the Inter-Class Battle Royale,” Theo declared. “Make sure that the security and the contingency measures are chosen properly.

“Deaths among the students will not be tolerated and is not an option. I don’t know what kind of gimmicks you plan to add this year, but make sure to put the safety of the students into consideration.”

“”Yes, President!””

Dante and Cassandra both promised to take care of everything.

— — —

Meanwhile, in the Mistral Weave Forest...

Several students wearing red armbands wandered around the forest.

Each of them held a bag of artifacts, which they chose to bury in set locations.

Dim Dim, who was perched on top of one of the Crimson-Furred Throwing Monkeys, silently looked at one of the students burying an artifact on the ground.

The little bun and his friends watched in silence as the young man left after doing his task.

Alex had assigned the Dim Sum God an important mission, which would play an important role in the upcoming event, turning the Mistral Weave Forest into a slaughterhouse.

Chapter 218: It Is Impossible To Wake Her Up

“Have you finished your mission, Dim Dim?”

“Dim!”

“Good.” Alex praised the little bun, who looked very proud of itself.

Unlike Dim Dim, Nessia lay on their club’s couch, looking like her soul had been sucked out of her body. She had been working on the task Alex had asked of her since yesterday, and by the time she finished, the strength she had left was barely able to let her go up the clocktower.

Few hours had passed since then, and she had yet to recover half her strength.

The other members of the club weren’t aware of Alex’s plan because he planned to keep this a secret from them.

The fewer who knew about the upcoming tragedy in the Inter-Class Battle Royale, the better.

Alex already knew that the Demon Worshipers had already infiltrated the academy and that some of them were students.

He might not know who all of them were, but he knew at least one Named Character who would play an important role in the upcoming event.

'Also, the outcome of the Battle Royale will also affect her choices,' Alex mused as he thought of the third Main Heroine of ELO.

In stories, there would usually be someone who didn't want to play the Hero.

Some of them prefer to be the villains and choose the dark route of the story.

That was fine, and there was nothing wrong with it since ELO was made to explore such possibilities.

In fact, Alex had also chosen the Dark Route on his fifth playthrough in the past, bringing Frieden Academy to its knees.

It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that he was well aware of the vulnerabilities of the academy, which the Demon Worshipers took advantage of.

'But it won't go your way this time.' Alex smiled evilly as he lightly patted the head of the Dim Sum God who had worked very hard since early morning. 'Still, I need to recruit them now while I still have the time.'

After giving Nessia one last glance, he took Dim Dim and went to find the sleeping beauty of the academy, Latifa.

The fox lady was one of Alex's Queens and would play an important role in the upcoming event.

Although Alex was confident that he would be able to handle everything with the help of his Club Members, having Latifa on his team would make things easier.

Since that was the case, why not try to rope in the young lady to his club before she was roped into another one?

In the game, making Latifa join any organization was next to impossible.

Even in her romance route, the Player was unable to convince her to join any clubs.

Why?

Because Latifa's main consciousness was the embodiment of Sloth.

She didn't want to do anything aside from sleeping.

Only her other consciousness, which increased with the number of her tails, was free to roam wherever they wished, except for one who must always protect their main body from harm.

Alex knew the locations where the fox lady usually took a nap, so he checked those locations one by one.

Fortunately, after reaching the seventh location, the fox lady was finally found.

Alex's lips couldn't help but twitch. Latifa was sleeping on top of the tomb of the Headmaster's wife, which was enshrined in a remote place in the academy.

No one visited this place, except for Professor Rowan, so it was one of Latifa's favorite places to take a nap.

There was one more thing that made Latifa a very hard character to romance.

She was nearly asleep twenty-two hours a day, seven days a week.

Latifa would still eat when she was hungry and drink when she was thirsty.

The young lady had no set time for eating or drinking, so catching her awake was a monumental task.

There was even a saying in the forums that even if the world were to end, Latifa would sleep through it all without giving a hoot.

And frankly, when the academy was destroyed in one of the bad endings of the game, Latifa was seen sleeping soundly on one of the destroyed buildings, unperturbed by the death and destruction that took place around her.

Simply put, waking her had a challenge rating of five stars, making those who plan to romance her the true hardcore players of ELO.

And the Top 69 Alex was of course one of them!

But the young man didn't plan to wake her up using the method he used in the game.

Why?

Because that would take too much time, and it would only be possible when he became a Second Year.

Alex wasn't worried though.

The reason?

He had a trump card!

“Dim Dim, go wake her up, okay?” Alex smiled at the Dim Sum God, whose eyes sparkled immediately.

Dim Dim had a knack for waking people up, and being given an opportunity to do so, made it excited.

As Alex placed the little bun on the ground, Dim Dim didn’t hesitate to head to where Latifa was sleeping.

“What are you doing here?” Latifa’s second consciousness asked.

It was the same consciousness that had accompanied Alex in the Chrono Maze, so she was already familiar with the young man.

Since Latifa had two other consciousnesses aside from her main one, they took turns roaming around the world while their main body slept.

“I need the help of your main body,” Alex answered. “So I need to wake her up.”

The second Latifa had already materialized and looked at Alex with a smirk.

“Good luck to that.” Latifa smiled confidently. “It is impossible to wake her up.”

“Then, how about a bet?” Alex asked. “If Dim Dim is unable to wake her up, I’ll do one favor you ask of me. But if Dim Dim succeeds, you will do me a favor. How about it?”

“Deal!” Latifa didn’t even hesitate to agree to Alex’s bet, confident that her main body wouldn’t wake up even if she was in the middle of a thunderstorm while an earthquake was taking place.

She then looked at Dim Dim with amusement as it crawled up the tomb and hopped onto Latifa’s chest.

'Let's see what you got.' Latifa giggled because she was really looking forward to seeing how Dim Dim would wake her main body.

She watched as the little bun stretched out its stubby little hand and poked the sleeping beauty's nose once.

Poke

As expected, the sleeping young lady didn't show any reaction, which made Latifa smirk.

However, instead of being sad or disappointed, Dim Dim looked more eager than before.

It once again stretched its stubby hand and poked the young lady's nose a second time.

Seeing that she wasn't reacting, Dim Dim poked her again.

Poke x3

Nothing.

Poke x 10.

Still nothing.

"Kukuku!" Dim Dim laughed evilly and stretched its little hand once again.

Poke x100!

The Dim Sum God poked the young lady's nose so fast that its little hand had blurred from the act.

Latifa, who was smiling earlier, gasped in shock because she didn't expect that Dim Dim would poke her nose a hundred times!

But, it didn't end there!

Poke x500

"...!" The Sleeping Beauty frowned in her sleep.

Perhaps, she was finally sensing that a great disturbance was happening in reality, which was starting to affect her dreamworld.

"Kukuku!" Dim Dim laughed.

Poke x 1000!

"!"

Poke x 2000!

"!!"

Poke x 5,000!"

""Stop poking my nose!""

Latifa's main body and her second consciousness both shouted at the same time as Dim Dim's pokes had successfully breached her defenses.

The young lady glared at the little bun, whose little hand was in mid-act of poking her nose for the umpteenth time.

The two stared at each other as if they were cowboys planning to shoot each other the moment someone made a move.

However, Dim Dim's little hand wavered.

At least, that was what Latifa thought.

The Dim Sum God poked Latifa's nose one more time, making the young lady scream in frustration as she reached out to grab the little bun and shake it to oblivion.

But Dim Dim jumped back just in time and landed a few meters away.

It then giggled because it had a good time poking Latifa's nose, which had had reddened a bit due to its rapid-fire poking.

"You!" Latifa's main body turned her attention to Alex and glared in his direction.

Her two consciousnesses shared everything during their wanderings, so she also knew who Alex and Dim Dim were.

"Good afternoon," Alex said with a smile. "I'm sorry about the forceful method that I used to wake you up. But I need your help."

"And why should I help you?" Latifa asked, still feeling miffed about being woken up by force.

"Because if you don't help me, I'll ask Dim Dim to visit you again," Alex replied.

The two Latifas were horrified by Alex's blackmail.

“Kukuku!” Dim Dim chuckled as it moved its little hand into a poking motion making the two Latifa’s faces turn pale from fright.

In the end, the young lady had no choice but to listen to Alex’s story or risk being visited by the little bun, whose poking had given Latifa a traumatic experience.

Chapter 219: Latifa’s Trial Period

“Well, what do you think?” Alex asked as he showed the fox lady the special place he had prepared for her in the clock tower.

A luxurious circular bed was positioned by the wall of the main room of the club room, where the members of Endless Horizon gathered.

The young lady’s lips twitched when she saw a name tag—with her name in fancy calligraphy—resting on a frilly cushion positioned right at the centre of the mattress.

Alex had spent a considerable amount of Academy Points to purchase this bed and had to fight the strong urge to buy the heart-shaped bed instead of the round one.

The young man knew that the ladies of his club would give him judgemental stares if he bought such a thing, so he played it safe when he purchased the ultimate bed for the sleeping beauty of the academy.

“Go on, test it,” Alex urged. “I guarantee that it will be better than your bed in the Vermillion Crest Dormitory.”

The Vermillion Crest Dormitory housed students who were members of the Royalty or other Noble Families.

Latifa glanced at Alex and the little bun that was perched on top of his head. She still felt hesitant about joining Endless Horizon since she had no intention of participating in any club activities at this point in time.

But since Alex had promised that he would ask for her help just once during the Inter-Class Battle Royale, Latifa decided to agree to the “trial period” that the young man had suggested.

She would join the Endless Horizon Club as a provisional member.

If, after a month, she deemed that the club unsuitable for her, she was free to quit.

“Remember, I only agreed to help you this once because I owe you a favor for helping Lucius,” Latifa reminded before walking toward the bed to sit on top of it.

Her eyes lit up with surprise and happiness as she immediately felt how soft yet firm the bed was.

It was as if the bed was adapting to her preferences and molding itself to her ideal of the perfect bed to sleep on.

Latifa then laid down her head on the pillow.

A few seconds later, she was fast asleep, catching her second consciousness—who was guarding her—by surprise.

Seeing this, Alex couldn’t help but smirk in self-satisfaction.

He had carefully chosen the best materials to create the most perfect bed in existence! In the game, there was an event where the player would assemble a bed for Latifa to sleep on.

It even had a grading system based on whether Latifa liked it or not.

After many trials and errors, Alex had managed to create a bed that earned a 99% compatibility rating. Naturally, it had increased Latifa’s affection meter in that playthrough.

For players, succeeding in the bed building event was crucial to developing a very good relationship with Latifa. In other words, this masterpiece had allowed him to progress further in her romance route.

“Strange...” the second Latifa muttered. “She’s sleeping so peacefully on an unfamiliar bed.”

The young lady then started to sniff the bed, wondering if Alex had infused it with some kind of sleeping potion to affect her main body.

She didn’t find anything nefarious, but she wasn’t too shocked since she already knew that sleep, paralysis, charm, and other status debuffs didn’t work on her original body.

She was just wondering how Alex managed to get her main body to fall asleep so quickly.

“Well, at least you seem to understand how to get in our good graces,” the second Latifa commented.

“That’s not all,” Alex replied as he waved his hand, turning the walls beside Latifa’s bed into a transparent window.

This allowed the fading afternoon sunlight to seep inside the room and cast its glow on the sleeping beauty of the academy.

With a snap of his finger, a faint breeze blew into the room. The breeze came from outside the tower and was able to pass through it using the magical filters that were imbued in the walls.

While the glass window prevented Latifa from rolling over and falling to her death, it didn’t prevent good ventilation. The cooling breeze blowing in was relaxing and soothing, allowing the young lady to sleep much more comfortably.

Even the second Latifa was impressed. Not only did the clock tower offer her original body, who was always sleeping, a safe place to rest, it also had special functions such as this.

“Latifa, I hope you will help us in the Inter-Class Battle Royale,” Alex said. “Can I count on you? And your other sister?”

This “sister” was Latifa’s third consciousness, who was currently wandering around who-knows-where.

The fox lady wasn’t exempted from the competition, so she had to participate no matter what.

Because of that, her two consciousnesses would be present in the Mistral Weave Forest. If they agreed to help Alex, he would gain the assistance of ethereal scouts who could go almost anywhere without fail.

“Very well,” the second Latifa replied. “We will help you. Just make sure that you also keep your word.”

Alex nodded before lightly patting Dim Dim’s head. “Dim Dim, remember, don’t poke Latifa when she’s sleeping, okay?”

Dim Dim didn’t answer right away. Instead, it looked at the sleeping young lady on the bed.

“...Dim!”

“There was a delay in your reply, Dim Dim. Remember, we have a deal with them, so you can’t break your promise, okay?”

“Dim!”

“Good.”

The Dim Sum God sighed as it looked at the sleeping beauty who had been able to withstand its poking thousands of times before waking up.

Aside from throwing things, Dim Dim seemed to have developed the habit of poking people awake, which it found quite amusing.

Unfortunately, Latifa was now off-limits, so the Dim Sum God decided to channel its poking skills toward Alex and Chuck instead!

In the Common Room of Ironheart Dormitory...

"Huh?!" Chuck gasped as his body shuddered uncontrollably without rhyme or reason.

"What's wrong?" Charles, who was currently playing a card game with him, asked.

"I just sensed something dangerous just now," Chuck replied with some uncertainty that he quickly disguised with self-love. "Maybe a beautiful girl has fallen in love with me and decided that she must kidnap me and lock me up to prevent other women from having me."

"Stop being delusional and pick a card already," ordered Nessia, who was also holding a few cards in her hands.

They were playing a game of old maid to pass the time until dinner.

Chuck sighed before picking a card from Nessia, which made the young lady smirk.

"Argh!" Chuck gritted his teeth after he pulled the Joker card. "Damn! Why do I always get this card?!"

Nessia giggled before glancing at Lavinia, who seemed to be out of sorts.

"Something on your mind?" Nessia inquired.

"I'm just wondering why Alex said we shouldn't go to the clock tower today. He did say he plans to invite Latifa to become a club member, but I don't know how it's related." Lavinia replied.

“Maybe he doesn’t want her to be overwhelmed by strangers.” Nessia shrugged.

It was impossible to not notice Latifa when their class had shared lessons with Class D.

The fox lady was always sleeping, so everyone was curious about her.

“But Alex will not do something without a good reason,” Nessia stated. “You know that, right?”

Lavinia nodded before holding her cards out to Renard so he could pick one from her.

“Don’t think too deeply, Lavinia,” Renard commented as he decided which card to take. “We just need to focus on the upcoming Inter-Class Battle Royale.”

Alex had talked to the members of his club one by one and explained the things they should watch out for in the Battle Royale.

While he hadn’t told them about the project that he, Dim Dim, and Nessia were working on, he didn’t hide any details about the dangers that they would face during the biggest annual event for the First Years.

“I suppose you’re right,” Lavinia said with a sigh. She could wait until tomorrow to meet the young lady currently sleeping in the clock tower.

What they didn’t know was that a few days later, Latifa would decide to permanently stay in the clock tower to sleep instead of going back to her dorm room.

This caused a little bit of trouble for Alex as it technically went against academy rules, even though it didn’t inconvenience anyone.

Luckily, the situation didn’t spiral out of control because Latifa mysteriously gained permission to remain in the clock tower and treat it as her permanent residence in the academy.

Chapter 220: I’m A Girl And Even I Can’t Tell

The next day...

“Everyone, please meet our new member, Latifa,” Alex said with a smile as he introduced the sleeping young lady at the corner of the room. “But since she can’t reply, let’s just allow Lotte to speak on her behalf.”

Since Latifa was sleeping peacefully, her second consciousness—which Alex had nicknamed Lotte—spoke in the place of her original body.

“Thank you for having me here.” Lotte bowed her head politely. “I hope you take good care of us.”

At first, she had been against the new nickname.

But Alex managed to convince her by pointing out it would be a little awkward if the third consciousness was with them and he had to call both of them Latifa. Besides, it was already confusing enough during the daily two hours when the original was awake.

Of course, since the option of giving Latifa’s consciousness nicknames was available in the game, Alex was able to convince her quite easily.

There was even a saying among the players that, if you chose Latifa, you got to have four other wives for free.

The reason for this saying was simple.

It was because at the end of the school term, Latifa would break through her current Rank and become a Rank 4 Celestial Walker.

Then, at the middle of her Second Year Term, she would experience a breakthrough once more, becoming a Rank 5 Celestial Walker.

With four consciousnesses who would develop different personalities, the fox lady was essentially made up of several versions of the person called Latifa. Even among the countless interesting side characters of ELO, Latifa stood out as unique because of this.

Of course, Alex had already prepared the nicknames for Latifa's other consciousness in preparation for the future.

"Welcome to the club, Latifa and Lotte!" Chuck gave the young lady a thumbs-up. "You will not regret your decision!"

"I hope so," Lotte replied with a polite smile.

Alex then asked everyone to sit as he would be talking about something very important today.

He took his seat at the head of the table and looked at his club members solemnly.

"Our goal is really simple," Alex began. "All of our club members must become part of the last ten survivors in the battle Royale. This is not going to be easy, so I'm going to tell you the names of the students that you must avoid once the battle starts."

The young man tapped the table lightly, and two magical projections appeared in front of them.

"Who are these two pretty ladies?" Chuck asked.

"Only one of them is a lady." Alex glanced at Chuck with amusement. "The other is a boy."

"Huh?!" Chuck rubbed his eyes as he looked at the two magical projections once more.

Still, the two projections were just as beautiful as before.

Chuck was not the only one confused. The other club members, including Lotte, were likewise surprised to hear that one of them was a boy.

“Which one of them is the boy?” Nessia asked. “I’m a girl and even I can’t tell...”

“The one with long black hair,” Alex answered. “His name is Vaan Damne.”

Everyone’s attention was immediately and completely on Vaan Damne. Despite Alex’s assertion, Chuck still doubted if the raven-haired beauty was really a boy.

His hair, glossy and voluminous, was tied in a ponytail. A few stray strands frame his face, adding to the impression that his loveliness was truly effortless, but Alex had really identified him by one of his least remarkable traits.

What really drew people in when they looked at Vaan was his purple eyes.

Eyes so pure and innocent that they captivated anyone who gazed upon them.

But Alex knew that hiding behind that face and name was a man in his late twenties, possessing the body of a child from a fallen noble family who had been sold to the organization by his parents.

He was also the first Mini Boss of the First Arc and would debut during the Inter-Class Battle Royale.

In the story, Vaan died alongside the demon worshiper controlling him. But the fans of the game refused to accept such an ending!

They all tried to find ways to save the fallen beauty, whom they believed deserved a second chance at life.

Admittedly, Alex also felt that Vaan’s death was rather unfair, especially after learning about his tragic backstory.

After countless playthroughs by different people, the players had found one way to save Vaan.

But they would have to make a lot of preparations to pull it off.

As in a LOT of preparations for it.

And even with all that preparation, the odds of saving him were extremely low because the success of this operation depended on whether players could correctly predict where Vaan would stand during the climax battle of the First Arc.

If players weren't anywhere near that location, then the plan to save Vaan would fail.

However, Alex modified this plan to give it a higher chance of success.

When he had played the game, he could rely on no one but himself to save Vaan. This was true for other players as well.

But now Alex's circumstances were different.

He wasn't alone.

He had friends to help him, which gave him an edge over a solo player who could only do things alone.

This was also why he needed Latifa's cooperation. Her power would be extremely helpful in his plan to save Vaan.

"When you meet him in Mistral Weave Forest, avoid him at all costs," Alex said. "He might look weak, but I guarantee you—if you try to eliminate him first, the one who will get eliminated is you."

Alex looked pointedly at Renard, who already looked like he thought that warning was either a suggestion or, worse, a challenge.

“Renard, I know that you are strong, but there is always someone stronger than you,” Alex stated. “But if you wish to get kicked out of the Battle Royale, feel free to try to take Vaan out. Just remember that I have already given you a heads-up, so don’t blame anyone for the consequences of your actions.”

Renard didn’t reply and simply stared at Vaan as if determined to commit every aspect of that pretty face to his memory.

“Then,” Chuck asked with a hint of hope, “who is the girl next to him?”

“Her name is Evangeline Feylune,” Alex answered. “The reason why I’m not asking any of you to eliminate her is because she also needs to be among the top ten survivors in the upcoming Battle Royale.”

“She is strong, but not so strong that it is impossible to defeat her. But like I said earlier, she must survive. She must become a survivor. Think of it as doing a good deed for the greater good.”

“You said that we shouldn’t eliminate her,” Lavinia chimed in. “Then should we consider recruiting her as a team member if we happen to come across her during the Battle Royale?”

“No.” Alex shook his head. “She doesn’t trust people easily and might even backstab you. It is best to leave her alone.”

Alex thought for a while and tapped the table once more.

Another magical projection appeared. This time, it was a young lady with long silver hair and pointy ears.

Her blue eyes were as clear as the sky, highlighting her good features.

“If you come across her, try to recruit her as a team member,” Alex said. “Her name is Lapis Sylvarin. She is the younger sister of Aeris Sylvarin, the current club president of Obsidian Fang.”

The young man eyed his club members with a smile.

"The Battle Royale can be viewed by the Second, Third, and Fourth Year students," Alex added. "This means that there is a high chance that Aeris will watch her sister's performance.

"If you try to eliminate her, you might end up getting on the bad side of Obsidian Fang. However, if you help her, you might earn their favor. Since there is no benefit in eliminating her, saving her or recruiting her as a team member is the ideal choice."

Alex then gave his roommate a brief side-long glance and tapped the table once more.

When Chuck saw Xenia appear, he looked at Alex silently, but his eyes said many things.

More specifically, they asked, "Bro, what are you planning?"

"She is Xenia Valeria," Alex announced gleefully, unable to stop himself from smirking. "The Fourth Princess of Avalon and Chuck's fiancée. Let's all do him a favor and avoid eliminating his future wife, okay?"

"S-She's not my future wife!" Chuck protested.

"She's your fiancée," Alex pointed out in a sing-song voice. "That means that she'll be your future wife, right?"

"You bastard! You already know about our situation, yet you still make fun of me." Chuck badly wanted to strangle the club president on the spot, but he held back, mostly because he understood that he couldn't win.

"Anyway," Alex continued, his tone serious again, "these are the students that you should avoid or help during the Battle Royale. Lastly, don't be stingy. Use your academy points to purchase items that will allow you to survive.

“Do not forget that we will be facing Class A in this event. They are not easy opponents to defeat, so if you don’t prepare properly, there is a solid chance that they will eliminate you first.”

Chuck raised his hand, prompting Alex to nod in his direction.

“Um, this is just a random question but...” Chuck hesitated. “Can we burn the Mistral Weave Forest to eliminate everyone?”

“... Do you want to die so badly?” Alex didn’t know if he should laugh or cry at his roommate’s creativity.

Not only would the Headmaster and the Professors prevent such a thing from happening, but the Guardian of the Mistral Weave Forest, which was a Rank 9 Monster, absolutely would not tolerate anyone even attempting such a thing.

If Chuck really started a forest fire, Alex would pretend they were strangers. He liked Chuck, but he didn’t want to be mistaken as the troublemaker’s accomplice lest he got expelled.

After a few more warnings and reminders, Alex finally concluded the meeting. He then encouraged his club members to interact more with Lotte so that they could get to know her better.