

Endless 221

Chapter 221: The Less People That Know About This The Better

Inside the Mistral Weave Forest, a week before the Inter-Class Battle Royale...

“Good job everyone,” a Third Year said with a smile. “We’ve finally finished everything.”

“Man, that was a lot of work.” Another Third Year massaged his shoulder. “I can’t believe it took us two weeks to plant these talismans all over the forest. Certainly the most digging I’ve done in my whole life. The First Years better have a lot of fun this year.”

“It wasn’t that bad. I’m glad the Student Council hired us. And they weren’t stingy with the pay at all, so we really shouldn’t complain.” A young lady sighed. “Though burying nearly a thousand talismans around the forest in specific locations was indeed hard work.”

“Let’s just go and eat. I’m hungry.”

“Yeah. A break sounds good right now.”

“What are we waiting for? Are you also coming with us, rookie?”

“No,” a young man replied. “I still have a few more talismans to put in place. You guys go first. I’ll catch up later.”

“Just make sure you finish this quickly, okay?”

“Of course. See you later, Seniors.”

After the Third Years bade him goodbye, the young man—whom many mistook as a young lady—smirked.

“Finally, it’s almost complete,” Vaan Damne said softly. “I can’t wait to see the look on the Headmaster’s face after he sees the fate of his beloved students.”

The young man gave the red crystal in his hand one last look before burying it in the ground near his feet.

His hand moved, rapidly forming a series of various signs. A faint ripple of magic soon spread across the entirety of the Mistral Weave Forest as he successfully imbued Rune Magic into the ground.

After finishing his work, Vaan visited three more locations and did the same thing.

He then left the forest in a good mood, looking forward to the most anticipated event that would serve as the grand welcome for the First Years.

After Vaan left the location where he buried the last crystal, Dim Dim and some of its monkey friends came out of their hiding places on top of several trees.

Dim Dim and the monkeys bit on the cookies that Fran had baked for them earlier today. They chewed thoughtfully as they observed the faint ripples of magic that were spreading on the ground.

After the Dim Sum God finished eating, it jumped off. A few of its monkey friends followed. Vaan was long gone by now, so they started digging into the ground to locate the red crystal.

Dim Dim eyed the red crystal with distaste before taking out a blue magic crystal from its dimensional storage and casually tossing it into the hole.

The monkeys then covered the hole once more, patting the ground properly to make it look even.

Lotte then appeared beside them with her hands resting on her waist.

“How did Alex know about this, Dim Dim?” Lotte asked.

“Dim Dim!”

“He’s a Seer?”

“Dim!”

“He doesn’t look like one.”

The Dim Sum God giggled, knowing that Alex was not really a Seer. Still, it was the perfect cover to justify him knowing many things in advance without being suspicious. Besides, Seers did not have a particular look that made them easily identifiable.

“Is that really the last one?” Lotte asked.

“Dim!”

“Okay.” Lotte’s relief was evident. “But I can’t believe he has so many magic crystals. Alex must have spent a fortune buying them all.”

Dim Dim shook its head and explained that the magic crystals Alex used had been farmed inside the Chrono Maze.

The young man had originally planned to auction them for gold coins, but he changed his mind.

In order for his plan to work, he needed the magic crystals to build their trump card for the Battle Royale.

“Well, then. Let’s go back, Dim Dim.” Lotte picked up the little bun, who waved to its simian friends and bade them goodbye.

The Crimson-Furred Throwing Monkeys waved back and promised to keep watch for any more disturbances in the forest.

When Lotte and Dim Dim arrived at the clock tower, they saw Alex looking at the magical map of the Mistral Weave Forest, lost in thought.

“Dim Dim!”

“We’re back.”

Dim Dim and Lotte announced their arrival, breaking the young man out of his daze.

“Welcome back,” Alex greeted. “Good work, the two of you.”

“Ahem!” Dim Dim raised its body proudly, making Lotte giggle.

She then glanced at her original body, who was currently wearing pink pajamas as she slept peacefully on the bed.

“Alex, I know there might be some Professors, as well as academy staff, who are demon worshipers or underlings working for them,” Lotte began. “But shouldn’t we at least report this to the Headmaster? If he knows about this, he will certainly put a stop to it.”

“He won’t,” Alex replied with confidence before turning back the map of the Mistral Weave Forest.

“Lotte, do you really think that the Headmaster isn’t aware of the existence of Demon Worshipers and their spies in the academy?”

“He’s aware?” Lotte frowned.

“Yes, he’s aware of them,” Alex answered. “Although he doesn’t know their real identities, he is aware that they are currently in the academy.”

“Then why is he not doing anything? As the Headmaster, shouldn’t he be protecting his students?”

“He is protecting them. In his own way, at least.”

“Huh?!”

Lotte stared at the young man, who seemed certain about what he was saying.

But she couldn’t understand it. If the Headmaster truly knew about the Demon Worshipers, then why hadn’t he kicked them out of the academy already?

Seeing that Lotte looked troubled, Alex decided to clarify a few things.

“The Headmaster is protecting the academy from forces the students cannot defeat,” Alex said.

“Demon worshipers and spies occasionally managed to infiltrate, slipping through the cracks of his protection. Fortunately, he has caught and eliminated most of them. Those who have managed to escape his grasp are the minority.

“You see, the Headmaster trusts the students of the academy very much. He believes that all of us have the ability to face the dangers that may appear when we least expect it. He isn’t wrong, is he? So far, the students have solved most problems on their own and are functioning well. And with that, we gain precious experience and learn valuable lessons.

“Lotte, this isn’t the first time the demon worshipers and their followers have tried to target students here. They have done it many times in the past, and they will do it again and again.”

Lotte’s expression turned grim after hearing Alex’s explanation. “But it’s more serious than ever in our generation,” she pointed out. “Students might actually die in the Battle Royale.”

“You’re right,” Alex agreed. “But if we were to expose the demon worshiper’s plan, they would think of other ways to harm the students and the academy. And this time, we might no longer be aware of their

actions, leading to more casualties. We would be revealing ourselves to them prematurely even as they could continue operating in the dark.”

Alex had played the game, so he knew what he could do in order to stop the incident in the upcoming inter-class event.

But if he tried to expose the demon worshipers at this point in time, he had no idea what they might be pushed to do.

That was the real problem.

If the situation deviated from what he knew would happen based on his knowledge of the game, he would not be able to come up with a plan that could definitely stop it.

So letting the demons execute their plan in the Battle Royale was safer than letting them do sinister things in places where Alex couldn’t see.

“Don’t worry, Lotte,” Alex said. “The demon worshipers will not succeed. We have worked hard to prevent it from happening.”

“But are you sure that only Nessia, Lavinia, and I should be aware of what’s really happening behind the scenes?” Lotte inquired.

“Yes,” Alex answered. “The less people who know about this, the better.”

Alex had also informed Lavinia about the demon worshipers since the Clawford Tribe were partly demon hunters.

As such, the young Catkin also did her own preparations, which would be effective against their enemies.

Alex eyed the map of the forest again and narrowed his eyes.

He had three goals for the upcoming Battle Royale.

The first goal was to prevent the demon worshipers from executing a one-sided slaughter of the students, which would, mildly put, land the academy in a lot of trouble.

The second one was to let his club members, as well as a select few, become the last survivors.

And last but not least was to save the real Vaan Damne, who was currently possessed by a demon worshiper.

The second goal could be ignored to a certain extent. Alex was prepared for the possibility that it might not come to pass. But the first and third goals were of utmost importance.

And just like the Demon Worshiper who was possessing Vaan, the president of Endless Horizon was also looking forward to the upcoming Battle Royale.

A Battle Royale between the Endless Horizon Club and the Demon Worshipers led by the demon wearing the form of a pitiful young man from a fallen noble family.

Chapter 222: The Battle Royale Of Frieden Academy [Part 1]

Several days passed. Soon, the most anticipated event for all the First Years finally arrived.

Two weeks before the event, the homeroom advisors had briefed the students everything they needed to know about the Inter-Class Battle Royale.

By the end of it, they had also advised their students to thoroughly prepare for this annual event, which would earn them academy points, honor, and glory.

It was also an opportunity for students to change their classes. Depending on their performance, even those from Class E and Class F could transfer to Class B. The appeal and benefits of doing so were obvious.

Right now, all the First Years had gathered outside of the Mistral Weave Forest.

Some wore armors or battle attires customized to their fighting styles.

The academy had permitted doing so for this particular event.

There were other students who simply wore their uniforms, but since this was a magical academy, the uniforms had enchantments that increased their defensive abilities.

The Second Years, Third Years, and Fourth Years were already looking at the screens that would show the progress of their favorite juniors in real time.

“Sister, don’t worry,” Cassian said as he held his sister’s hand. “I will be monitoring your progress. If anyone hurts you, I’ll beat the crap out of them after the Battle Royale ends! I promise you this!”

The Second Year didn’t even bother to lower his voice, as if to make sure that he could be heard by as many First Years as possible.

Clearly, he was giving them a warning as well as a threat: If anyone dared to harm his little sister, he would beat the crap out of them without fail!

“Good!” Astrea nodded happily. “Make sure to beat them up, Brother!”

“Haha! Leave it to me. So, my little sister, just have fun and kill them without worries!”

“Yay!”

The First Years looked at Cassian with contempt.

They couldn’t eliminate or hurt his sister, but she could eliminate and beat them up?

Where was the justice?

Where was the fairness?

“Fran, remember what I told you, okay?” Alex said to the dwarf lady standing beside him.

“Yes.” Fran nodded solemnly. “I’ll be careful.”

Alex had also informed her an hour ago about the demon worshipers who would appear in the forest later.

Although Fran had been shaken by the news, Alex had assured her that she had nothing to worry about.

The young man had even asked her to help their club in dealing with the demon worshipers, which Fran had readily agreed to.

“Everyone, please listen to my announcement!” shouted Professor Gareth, catching everyone’s attention.

All the First Years stopped talking and paid attention to the Professor responsible for this special event since he was already in charge of Mistral Weave Forest.

“As you may already know, this Battle Royale will be the first major event for all the First Years,” Professor Gareth announced.

“As such, the student councillors have prepared many surprises for their darling juniors. Aside from your fellow students who will be doing their best to eliminate you, phantom soldiers will also spawn inside the forest after two hours.

“These Phantom Soldiers are as strong as Rank 3 and Rank 4 monsters. Their main goal is to exterminate all of you. This Battle Royale will last for six hours. But if more than ten students remain by then, our Rank 6 Monsters will spawn in random locations in the forest.

“Don’t worry. None of you will really die when you are eliminated. You will simply be ejected from the forest, so all of you can fight to your fullest!”

The students cheered, with the exception of Alex.

He knew that two hours later, when the “Phantom Soldiers” started appearing, the safety feature that prevented the students from dying would be turned off.

The forest would also be covered by a powerful barrier, preventing anyone outside from coming to the students’ rescue.

The demon worshiper’s goal was simple—turn the forest into a slaughterhouse.

All the members of the Phantom Soldiers were demon worshipers. All were prepared to die for their cause.

These suicide soldiers intended to kill as many students as possible and thus destroy the reputation of Frieden Academy.

This plan, many years in the making, was so thorough that these demon worshippers believed they would succeed without a shred of doubt.

Alex glanced at his club members, who nodded back.

Even the usually happy-go-lucky Chuck had a serious expression as he stood beside his fiancée, Princess Xenia.

“Why are you sticking to me?” Princess Xenia demanded. “Do you want me to carry you or something? Have you forgotten that we will be sent to random locations in the forest?”

“I didn’t forget,” Chuck answered. “I’m just here because I care about other people. I want to bless them with the opportunity to admire my good looks and yours at the same time.”

“... If I see you in the forest, I’ll kill you first,” Princess Xenia said coldly.

“On second thought, I think I should go to my best friend’s side. He might need me for emotional support.” Chuck coughed lightly. “See you later, okay?”

Chuck made a strategic retreat, knowing full well that his fiancée was a lady of her word.

Alex looked amused as he watched his roommate walk in his direction. However, something else quickly caught his eye.

Latifa appeared in the gathering area, floating in the air. She was still wearing her pajamas, sleeping peacefully.

Actually, she wasn’t floating at all. Lotte had simply turned invisible and was carrying her.

Naturally, this also attracted everyone else’s notice. And to their surprise and growing anger, Latifa headed toward Alex.

When she stopped before the young man, her fan club stared daggers at him, who simply returned their glares with a smug—and extremely punchable—grin.

‘Yes, that’s it!’ Alex laughed internally. ‘Feel jealous! Feel envious!’

Of course, he had the good sense to keep his thoughts to himself. If the young man had dared to say what’s on his mind, it would’ve taken Latifa’s fans less than half a minute to trample him under their feet until he was one with the ground.

Professor Gareth, who was making sure that all of the First Years were present, finally raised his hand.

“The event will start in ten minutes,” Professor Gareth announced. “If you want to say your prayers, now is a good time.”

Some of the students chuckled, but some did in fact pray to the deities of the world.

Alex knew that it wouldn’t hurt to offer a little prayer, so he placed Dim Dim on top of Fran’s head and clasped his hands together.

“Ahem!” Dim Dim stood as tall as it could because it knew what Alex was doing.

Fran, on the other hand, couldn’t help but smile at the young man’s antics.

Out of all the Deities he could pray to, why did he pick the little bun on her head instead?

Of course, the cute dwarf didn’t know that Dim Dim was the Big Boss of all the Deities of Arcana.

Although it had lost most of its divinity after creating the world, that didn’t change the fact that Dim Dim was still the spiritual leader of everything that existed in the world.

Ten minutes later...

“Good luck to all of you,” Professor Gareth said as he raised his right hand. “I look forward to seeing the final survivors of this year’s Inter-Class Battle Royale!”

A moment later, all the students transformed into beams of light that flew toward random places in Mistral Weave Forest.

Alex and Dim Dim found themselves in a small clearing beside a river located near the center of the forest.

“Well, then. It’s time for battle,” Alex said. “Are you ready, Dim Dim?”

“Kukuku!”

Dim Dim chuckled impishly as it took out a brittle vial from its dimensional storage, itching to fight.

It had been looking forward to this battle, so that it could test its arsenal of throwing weapons, which it had meticulously prepared just for this moment.

Chapter 223: The Battle Royale Of Frieden Academy [Part 2]

Lotte, still carrying Latifa, was teleported to a random spot in Mistral Weave Forest.

After scanning her surroundings, the young lady instantly understood where she was in the forest.

But, just to be sure, she flew above the trees to check if she was right.

‘I’m quite far from the agreed drop off point,’ Lotte thought. ‘But I guess there’s no helping it.’

Lotte glanced at her original body, who was in her pajamas, and shook her head helplessly.

Since she couldn’t do Alex’s mission while carrying Latifa, she decided to head to the drop-off point first to hide her original body.

As long as Lotte brought her original body to that place, no students would be able to harm her.

And thus, Lotte flew as fast as she could towards her destination while keeping an eye out for possible sneak attacks from other students, who were now scattered within the forest.

When Alex had shared his plan, the first thing that he asked of Latifa and Lotte was to memorize the entirety of Mistral Weave Forest.

If the young man had asked this of anyone else, they might have punched him silly because this was a monumental task.

The Mistral Weave Forest extended for hundreds of miles.

Memorize it?

That was impossible!

But there was one person in the academy that could do it, and it was none other than Latifa.

There were two reasons for this.

The first reason was that Latifa's Astral Bodies, Lotte and Lumi, could take solid form if they wished.

However, in their Astral Forms, they could practically travel anywhere. No walls could block their way.

The second reason was that Latifa had eidetic, or photographic, memory.

As Lotte sped among the trees, the Crimson-Furred Throwing Monkeys gave her the all-clear, assuring her that there were no students in the vicinity.

Since Lotte had also spent some time with Dim Dim in the forest, the monkeys were already quite familiar with her, and treated her as a friend of their friend.

The monkeys watched the young lady fly past them before they spread out to look for the other members of Endless Horizon, whom they also planned to help during the Inter-Class Battle Royale.

“There is no rule that states that the monsters in the forest cannot help the students.”

This was what Alex had told his club members during their last meeting about the event. As such, he made sure to tell them that all the Crimson-Furred Throwing Monkeys were their allies, so they shouldn't attack these monsters no matter what.

A few miles away from Lotte's location, Charles summoned his ants and ordered them to scout his surroundings.

Every class, every club, even every group of friends among the First Years had created their own strategy on how to work together.

Naturally, the members of Class C had promised not to attack each other.

Anyone who did would be branded a traitor and would be punished by everyone in the class. They would be ostracized for the rest of the school year, maybe even longer.

The other classes had come to the same agreement. However, no one was naive enough to think that this promise was inviolable, especially towards the last lap of the event when the pressure to become one of the top ten survivors would be stronger than ever.

Even then, they would have to weigh their risks carefully. If they really decided to betray their classmates, they had to be absolutely certain they would be one of the survivors.

That way, they could change classes and leave their former classmates to seethe in helpless anger.

There were few things more pathetic than people who sold out their principles for no gain.

It didn't take long before the sound of fighting spread within Mistral Weave Forest. The students from the rival classes of Class A and Class B immediately fought each other as soon as they met.

Class B was filled with students who wanted to prove that they were not second best despite being in the second best class. Since the most direct way to accomplish that was to surpass the students of Class A, the rivalry between the top two classes was anything but playful.

Lavinia did not care about that. She had just always liked the idea of hunting others.

This was part of the training that all the children of the Clawford Tribe had to go through during their initiation ceremony.

She didn't hold back against anyone who had the misfortune of not being her club members or among the people that Alex had listed.

There was one other person who shared her sentiments.

And that was Renard.

He already had trust issues, so when thrown into a survival test like this, he didn't hesitate to eliminate any opponents that stood in his way.

Among the members of Alex's Club, perhaps the one who had the easiest time was Nessia.

The young lady was walking confidently in the forest like it was her own backyard.

'This feels like cheating,' Nessia thought. 'But it doesn't feel that bad.'

Having absolute control and dominion over the Mistral Weave Forest was something that she had never expected to happen.

Dim Dim had scattered the magic crystals according to Alex's instructions, creating a grand magic formation that encompassed a good chunk of the Mistral Weave Forest.

Nessia could sense or view anyone within that formation, allowing her to avoid contact with the other students as well as the monsters who dwelled within the forest.

Simply put, if Nessia didn't want to be found, no one in the forest would be able to find her.

The students were free to use anything at their disposal.

Whether it be to run, or hide, the choice was up to them.

However, there was one exception that the Student Council had implemented before the start of the Battle Royale.

Digging or burrowing under the ground was forbidden.

Offenders would receive a penalty that, depending on the situation, might be as severe as disqualification.

An hour after the event started...

"I know what Alex said, but I'm still tempted to raze this entire forest," Chuck muttered as he followed a small flame that he had conjured up after the Battle Royale began.

The flame would flicker from time to time, telling the teenage boy that he was close to his destination.

A moment later, he heard the sound of fighting, which prompted him to run in the direction where the sounds were coming from.

It didn't take long before he arrived at a small clearing and saw two students ganging up on a young lady wielding a sword.

Fortunately or unfortunately for Chuck, the swordswoman was Princess Xenia, one of the seniors' favorites. Many observers believed that she had a very good chance of making it into the final ten.

However, none of that mattered to Chuck. All he noticed was that his fiancée was under attack. Without any hesitation, he unleashed several fire bullets at the two students, catching them by surprise.

Princess Xenia didn't miss this window of opportunity and went straight for the kill.

Her sword sliced through the bodies of the two students, turning them into particles of light and eliminating them from the competition.

As things were still going to plan, the eliminated students were teleported out of the forest, where the medical staff were on standby.

"Fancy meeting you here, Xenia," Chuck greeted his fiancée with what he hoped to be a winning smile.

Princess Xenia gave him a brief nod before walking away. While she recognized that he had helped her, she had no intention of staying with him because she believed that he would just be leeching off her. Obviously, that was something that she didn't want to happen.

But since when did the universe care about what she wanted or not when it came to this man?

Chuck, like a lost puppy, followed her as if it was the most natural thing to do.

"Stop following me!" Princess Xenia snapped. "Do you want to be eliminated?"

"Of course not," Chuck answered. "That's why I'm following you! As my fiancée, isn't it your duty to protect me?"

"Oh?" Xenia's lips curved upwards into what could charitably be called a smile as she slowly raised her hand.

“You’re right,” she cooed.

“I am?” Chuck blinked.

“Yes, I do need to protect my darling future husband.”

The young man’s immediate instinct was to nod in agreement, but something felt very, very wrong.

He couldn’t tell why for sure, but it was probably because Xenia’s sword was now above her head. “My beloved,” she all but purred, “I will save you from this dangerous competition before others get the chance to hurt you.”

“O-Oi! Stop!” Chuck hurriedly backed away to the tree closest to him and tried to hide behind it.

Xenia thought this was all just bad luck, but before the Battle Royale Chuck had stood beside her to secretly put a tracking spell on her. He had learnt how to do so from Nessia at Alex’s insistence.

Princess Xenia was one of the people that the members of Endless Horizon were not allowed to eliminate because Alex still cared about his roommate’s future happiness. He had also ordered Chuck to protect her to the best of his ability.

The tracking spell had allowed Chuck to locate Xenia as quickly as possible after they had been teleported into the forest.

However, it had still taken him an hour to find her and the last thing he wanted to happen now was to die by her hands.

Wouldn’t that be a pitiful ending after working so hard?

Ever since that fishing competition that might or might not have been an attempt on Chuck’s life, the princess no longer approached him on her own accord. She simply minded her own business.

That didn't mean that she was alright with him trailing behind her. No, the sight of him grated on her nerves. No matter what she had promised him before, she now felt sorely tempted to stab him. She couldn't eliminate this pest once and for all, but at least she could get him out of her hair for the duration of the Battle Royale.

Half an hour later, Xenia finally snapped. She spun around, ready to bury her sword in this nuisance she was meant to marry.

But her fiance was like a cockroach.

Even when she attacked him with the full intention of getting him eliminated, he would simply run away and escape. Time and time again he slipped out of her range.

"Xenia, calm down," Chuck said as he peeked out from behind a tree. "You're just tiring yourself out. What will you do if someone attacks you while you're tired? Won't you feel sad if you get eliminated because you are trying to kill your fiance?"

'This shameless bastard might just become one of the survivors of this competition,' Princess Xenia realized as she panted for breath. 'Why is he so good at running away?!'

No one would ever accuse Chuck of being among the most powerful mages in the academy, but he was definitely one of the most resourceful.

Whenever the Princess charged in his direction, he would escape by using his fire magic to propel him farther like a rocket booster.

This made it impossible for the princess to even come close to him. Of course, that only made her angrier.

'Half an hour more and they will finally appear,' Chuck thought as he glanced at his pocket watch.

Alex had told him that the Phantom Soldiers that would appear after two hours weren't really Phantom Soldiers but Demon Worshipers.

That was the start of the tragedy that would befall the First Year students of Frieden Academy.

'I just hope that you have made enough preparations, Alex,' Chuck thought as he continued to dodge the attacks of his fuming fiancée, who had no idea what was going to happen in half an hour. 'Otherwise, I might just burn this forest to the ground as a last resort.'

Chuck trusted his roommate, but he also had people he wanted to protect.

If their lives were in danger, he would not hesitate to become the bad guy hated by the entire academy. For their sakes, he didn't mind becoming a villain.

Meanwhile, in another part of the forest...

Renard found himself being surrounded by four students from Class A. The leader was the third Main Hero of ELO.

He was none other than the Third Prince of the Kingdom of Avalon, Edward Von Morwyn.

A character who was more inclined to choose the Evil Route instead of the Righteous One due to his personality.

Chapter 224: I'm Your Future Husband

Students and staff alike had gathered in front of the magical screens scattered across the campus, eager to cheer for their favorite First Years.

When the Battle Royale started, each student was teleported at least five miles away from other students.

This was to ensure that the weaker students would have a chance to survive the first few minutes of the event.

While a big chunk of the forest was used as the battlefield, a part of it was kept off limits to the participants.

In fact, an invisible barrier had been erected to prevent the more aggressive and powerful monsters from unnecessarily endangering the First Years.

Professor Rowan was enjoying a cup of tea as he watched the event in real time.

There were several magical screens in front of him. At the center of them all was a masked young lady with long billowing hair.

Since she was a First Year, she wasn't exempted from participating in the Battle Royale.

Also, the Headmaster had given her an important mission, so her participation was a must.

The Professor then shifted his gaze to the two magical screens to the right of the middle screen.

A young lady who had tied her long black hair into a low ponytail wandered about the forest as if it was her grandfather's private garden.

Her eyes were like beautiful amethysts... At least, that was what most guys would think if they didn't know her better.

Why?

Because the beautiful lady was actually a boy going by the name of Vaan Damne.

He was wearing the uniform meant for the girls, making it practically impossible to discern that he was in fact a guy.

Naturally, some of his male classmates were quite smitten with him.

But Rowan knew who Vaan really was and his reason for pretending to be a girl.

His family's circumstances were complicated. For his own safety, he had been forced to dress up as a girl.

On one of the other monitors was a true young lady with sun-kissed skin that glowed like warm bronze.

Her eyes were like molten topaz, nearly golden in colour, and her long blonde hair fluttered behind her as she walked with confidence.

She was Evangeline Feylune.

In her hands were two short swords glinting with a deadly light as if they were seeking prey they could test their sharpness on.

Suddenly, she stopped and stared directly at the hidden recording crystal. It was as if she was making eye contact with the many spectators observing her and the other First Years.

A look of annoyance flashed across her beautiful face, but it soon disappeared after she heard the sound of fighting in the distance.

She hurriedly ran in that direction and joined the battle like a wild cat, eliminating both combatants with a sneak attack that they didn't see coming.

Professor Rowan chuckled before shifting his gaze to a handsome young man with short silver hair and a little white bun perched on top of his head.

The Headmaster was paying close attention to several individuals which he believed would play an important role in what was going to unfold next.

Professor Gareth and he had interrogated the demon worshipper who had tried to impersonate Lucius. After rounds of questioning, they had become aware of the plan to sabotage the Inter-Class Battle Royale.

But instead of canceling the event, the Headmaster had decided to let it happen.

Professor Gareth had asked him why, but the Headmaster had only replied that they should trust their students because they would be able to handle something of this level.

Although Professor Gareth was hesitant, he decided to believe in the Headmaster, who believed in the capabilities of their students.

Rowan watched as Alex and Dim Dim fought against the Shadow Wolves that had been conjured up to hunt the students in the forest.

However, they were clearly no match against the young man and the little bun who made short work of them.

Suddenly, Dim Dim cried out a warning, prompting the young man to jump to his right, just in time to evade an arrow meant for his chest.

Rowan watched with amusement as Alex ran in the direction where the arrow had come from to catch the culprit.

When he burst through the trees, he managed to catch a glimpse of his fleeing attacker.

"Dim Dim!" Alex shouted.

"Dim!"

Dim Dim jumped off Alex's head and bounced off the tree trunks like a speeding pinball that had locked on to its target.

The archer, a young lady with long silver hair, turned to look at the little bun that was pursuing her before tapping a tree as she ran past it.

The tree suddenly moved, swatting at Dim Dim with its branches.

Fortunately, Alex conjured a magical shield right beside the Dim Sum God, which the latter used to bounce off and evade the branch that would have turned it from a bun into a pancake.

Alex decided to change direction so that he and Dim Dim could do a pincer attack and trap their target.

After he made a turn, he came face to face with the person he was chasing.

And he froze on the spot.

“Lapiz?!” Alex gasped after recognizing his attacker.

The young elven lady already had an arrow nocked, ready to fire it at Alex.

But she paused after the young man called out her name.

“Who are you?” Lapiz asked, her arrow still aimed at Alex. “How did you know my name?”

“I’m your future husband,” Alex replied before he could even stop himself.

“Huh?!” The answer shocked Lapiz so much that she accidentally released the arrow.

Alex’s fast reflexes saved him when he raised his shield just in time to block the arrow.

He wanted to give himself a good slap—maybe even a few good slaps—for saying something that might have already left a bad first impression on the beautiful elf.

“Wait! Don’t attack!” Alex raised his hands in surrender. “I don’t have any intention of harming you. I propose a truce!”

Lapiz frowned. She had already nocked another arrow and aimed it at the young man. His strangeness did not reassure her one bit.

Dim Dim, who also recognized Lapiz, jumped back on top of Alex’s head and waved cutely at her.

Lapiz lowered her bow because she had no intention of harming Dim Dim.

She had once crossed paths with the little bun when it was patrolling the academy with the Doom Cow, Daisy.

Dim Dim, being the friendly little bun that it was, had offered Lapiz some custard buns, which the latter liked very much.

Although that had been their only interaction, she thought well of Dim Dim, which was why she decided not to attack Alex.

At least for now.

“What did you mean when you said that you are my future husband?” Lapiz asked solemnly.

“Um, let’s forget that ever happened.” Alex coughed lightly. “That is something for the future.”

“Huh?!”

“I mean, no one knows what the future holds. Maybe, we might end up as a couple, you know?”

Unbeknownst to him, countless students watching the Battle Royale were now flipping him off. Many also put his name on their hit list. In fact, they placed him at the very top.

The President of the Obsidian Fang Club, another silver-haired elf, promptly summoned her trusted subordinate and asked her to do a background check on the young man who dared to mess with her younger sister.

Cassian Nocturne was not the only overprotective older sibling at Frieden Academy. There was Aeris too.

Right now, she was paying close attention to Lapid's performance. She was also keeping track of the people who might harm the young elf.

That way, if Lapid was harmed, Aeris would know who she should personally deal with "legally" so she could "legally" make them regret ever hurting her sister.

She wasn't a siscon like Cassian, but she still cared for Lapid in her own way.

"Okay, just calm down." Alex knew that he had made another mistake, so he decided to lower the tension for a bit. "My name is Alex Stratos. I am the president of Endless Horizon and currently the top ranker in the Seventh Training Room. I'm pretty popular, so you might have heard of me, right?"

"Yes, I have heard your name," Lapid replied carefully. "I overheard Chuck saying that you liked Dwarves. Is that true?"

The corners of Alex's lips twitched.

He then made a vow to beat the crap out of his roommate after the Battle Royale for not keeping his darned mouth shut. 'Chuck, you better be one of the last ten survivors because I am going to kill you when we're done with this.'

"I-I love all races!" Alex answered. "I like Dwarves, Elves, Foxkins, Humans, and Demons."

“... You like Demons?” Lapiz immediately raised her bow again as if Alex hadn’t just shot himself. In the foot.

He had forgotten that Lapiz hated Demons because of an incident that happened when she was younger.

“I-I mean, not all Demons are bad, you know?” Alex tried to use reason. “Some of them are nice demons.”

“Demons are never nice!” Lapiz shouted. Her face flushed with fury and her eyes locked onto Alex’s body.

Clearly, she was only a moment away from firing her arrow at the young man. Future husband or not, he was still one of her competitors in the Battle Royale.

“Dim Dim!” Dim Dim called out to Lapiz, asking her to not shoot Alex.

The young lady hesitated before lowering her bow.

It was obvious to her that the young man had no intention of fighting against her, so she decided to lower her weapon once more.

“Listen, Lapiz,” Alex said after the young lady lowered her weapon. “I know that what I’m going to say might sound ridiculous, but how about we team up and survive this Battle Royale together?”

“I don’t trust you,” Lapiz replied before walking away. “Don’t follow me, okay? If you do, I promise that I will no longer hold back and shoot you.”

Alex hesitated, but still nodded in agreement.

He didn't want the young lady to have a bad impression of him, so he decided to leave her alone for now.

Also, she was right.

If he had been in her shoes, he also would not have easily trusted a weird guy he was seeing for the first time.

'At least she has this kind of awareness,' Alex thought. 'That way, she won't be deceived by anyone so easily.'

After watching her go, Alex glanced at the timer before coming up with a plan.

"Dim Dim, stay with Lapid for now," Alex said. "The time is nearly upon us, so I want you to protect her."

"Dim!" Dim Dim nodded and jumped off from Alex's head to follow Lapid and keep her safe when the Demon Worshipers appeared in the forest.

Chapter 225: All Part Of The Plan [Part 1]

"It's about time," Professor Gareth muttered as he looked at the hourglass by his side. The top bulb had almost been emptied.

A minute or two more, and the two-hour grace period for the students would end. And when the time came, the Phantom Soldiers would appear. Their role was simple—eliminate all the students one by one.

The Professor couldn't help but sigh as he thought of the Headmaster's words.

"Believe in our students. They can handle this."

Professor Gareth didn't know where the Headmaster's confidence was coming from.

'They're just First Years,' Professor Gareth thought. 'What can they possibly do?'

After interrogating the Demon Worshiper, the Headmaster had ordered Professor Gareth to keep the information to himself. He was not to divulge what they had learned to anyone, and that included his son, the treasurer of the student council.

The Professor could only look at the monitor showing Vaan Damne, even though he knew that the young man would be responsible for what was about to come.

As soon as the last grain of sand fell to the bottom, a grand magic circle appeared, encompassing a vast area of the Mistral Weave Forest.

It was something that everyone was expecting, and yet, it somehow felt foreboding at the same time.

Above the magic circle was a red dome that prevented anyone from leaving or entering the battlefield.

Suddenly, countless Phantom Soldiers appeared as planned.

But they were not alone.

Several individuals, all in black cloaks, also appeared in the forest. None of the magical screens had detected their presence.

They were none other than the Demon Worshipers, who had come to start their killing spree, and they moved to activate the magic formation that would give the First Years of the academy a very tragic experience.

Even the safety mechanism that the student council had set in place to ensure that their juniors wouldn't die during the Battle Royale was suddenly disabled, marking the start of the tragedy that the Demon Worshipers had been planning for over a year.

Sitting on a tree branch, Nessia looked up at the red dome that had suddenly encapsulated the entire forest and sighed in her heart.

"A Seer, huh?" Nessia murmured as she remembered what Alex had told her.

The plan the young man had dragged her into joining had been so daring that, if found out, could get both of them expelled.

She had only agreed after Alex promised that if they were exposed, he would shoulder all responsibilities and tell everyone that he alone had done the unthinkable.

Now that the young man's chilling prophecy had finally come to pass, Nessia felt oddly relieved. She was glad that despite her doubts, she had agreed to his request.

"First, I need to re-activate the safety formation," Nessia said as she lightly tapped the tree branch, activating a set of runes that lit the tree up like a Christmas tree. "That way, no students will die even if they are killed."

A faint blue ripple emitted from the tree's roots, spreading out in all directions until it covered the entire area under the red dome.

Nessia closed her eyes and saw one of the cloaked individuals stab a student in the chest while cackling way too dramatically.

"Why?!" the student asked as blood seeped out from the corner of his lips.

"Why?" the cloaked individual echoed in disdain. "It's because you are a student of this wretched school. If you want to blame someone for your death, blame the Headmaster for not being here to save you!"

Similar scenes were happening all over the forest as the Demon Worshipers systematically tracked down and killed the students.

However, just as these students were about to truly die, their bodies turned into particles of light, which quickly disappeared before the Demon Worshipers could even get over their shock.

“Sorry, but you’re not killing anyone under my watch.”

Nessia’s voice reverberated through the forest. Demon Worshipers and students alike heard her declaration.

“Also, Mr. President, don’t forget that you owe me, okay?”

Alex, who had just rammed a Phantom Soldier against the trunk of a particularly massive tree, couldn’t help but chuckle after hearing the young lady’s words.

“Of course,” Alex replied before beheading the Phantom Soldier with his sword. “I’ll make the student council foot this bill later on. Don’t worry, our club will be filthy rich after this.”

Nessia smiled. Although Alex was far away from her, she could see and hear everything happening in the forest.

Now, she just had to wait. Once Vaan activated the artifacts he had buried in the forest, they would enact the next phase of their plan.

A minute later, a giant octagram appeared above the forest. It was filled with countless runes, shining like stars.

All the remaining students, including Nessia, suddenly felt a force pulling them down. It was as if gravity had increased by about four times.

Some students collapsed on the ground, unable to move. Others were able to resist, but only to a certain extent.

Their bodies were simply too heavy for them to go anywhere.

Vaan's magical formation did not affect the Demon Worshipers and Phantom Soldiers, who immediately intensified their killing spree.

They were eager to start killing their powerless victims. However, their sadism gave way to confusion and frustration when the students simply refused to die. Instead of turning into corpses, they all transformed into particles of light and were ejected from the forest.

After deeming that the right time had come, Nessia tapped another engraved rune on the branch.

This sent another ripple of power expanding through the forest.

The pressure immobilizing the members of Endless Horizon and a handful of other students—including Franz, Astrea, Princess Xenia, Lapid, and Evangeline—disappeared completely.

This allowed them to defend themselves against the Phantom Soldiers, as well as the Demon Worshipers, who had no idea what was happening.

"This shouldn't be happening!" one of the Demon Worshipers roared uselessly in anger. "Why aren't they dying?! Why?!"

They had come to slaughter the helpless students trapped by Vaan's powerful formation.

The students had indeed been helpless and defenseless at first, unable to do anything as the Demon Worshipers and Phantom Soldiers attacked them.

But instead of leaving bloody bodies behind, the killed students were simply sent out of the forest. Even to the most simple-minded Demon Worshiper, it was obvious that the students would survive this supposed tragedy.

Outside the forest, Professor Gareth was busy checking up on the students that had been teleported to the Field Infirmary.

They suffered various levels of injuries, but he could determine that none of them would be fatal. He allowed himself a small sigh of relief, unwilling to appear shaken before his students.

The special counter that the student council had created to track the number of students left showed that the survivors were quickly getting eliminated by this one-sided slaughter.

The Demon Worshipers had expected an effortless victory, so they did not bother to hide their actions. The seniors observing the Battle Royale through magical screens couldn't help but gasp in shock when they finally saw some Demon Worshipers in action.

The student councillors went pale—especially Cassandra, who had been responsible in setting up Phantom Soldiers.

Never in her wildest dreams had she thought of the possibility that terrorists might hijack the Phantom Soldiers for their own purposes!

“Break the barrier, now!” Theo ordered.

The students and Professors joined hands as they unleashed their strongest attacks on the red dome that prevented anyone from entering or leaving the forest.

However, no matter what they did, they couldn't even leave a mark on the red barrier.

The only person who could break it was the Headmaster, but he was currently sipping some tea as if he were watching a theatre performance put up by children for a town festival, not a terrorist attack unfolding in real time.

His faint smile revealed that he had no intention of breaking the barrier.

“Sly brat,” Professor Rowan remarked in an amused, even pleased, tone as he watched Alex ignore a student who was about to be killed by a Phantom Soldier.

Clearly, Alex wasn't going to try saving any of his peers from their attacks. No, he was cheering the Demon Worshipers and Phantom Soldiers on, at times even thanking them for helping him eliminate his fellow competitors.

That was not all. He snapped his fingers like an entitled customer to get the attention of a Demon Worshiper. As soon as the Demon Worshiper turned to him, face twister in anger, he helpfully pointed at a student hiding in some bushes.

And then he ran away.

The staff, councillors, and students could only stare at the magical screens in disbelief.

"What the hell?! Is that brat a traitor?!"

"Wait, isn't that Alex Stratos? The top ranker in the Seventh Training Room?"

"Did you guys not notice anything strange? Everyone is paralyzed, but his club members can move about just fine!"

"Are you blind? Can't you see that Princess Xenia and Miss Astrea are also unaffected?"

The seniors tried to make sense of what was happening, but it was in vain. They were just as perplexed as they had been when the first student was "killed," and they were no closer to understanding the situation.

The number on the counter had gone from over two hundred to a hundred in a matter of minutes. Now, only dozens of students were still in the forest.

By the time the Headmaster finished brewing himself a new pot of tea, that number had dropped to fifteen.

As the Battle Royale would not end until there were only ten survivors, the barrier around the forest would not disappear, no matter what, until five more students were eliminated.

Chapter 226: All Part Of The Plan [Part 2]

A young lady walked unhurriedly inside the forest.

At least, that was what most people would assume if they saw her. After all, with the femininity and grace practically oozing out of her body, it would cross no normal person's mind that this beauty was actually a crossdressing boy.

Moreover, what others thought of his fashion choices was the last thing on Vaan Damne's mind right now. He was perplexed—very perplexed. The plan he had meticulously prepared seemed to have encountered a mishap. Worse, it's not clear what exactly this mishap was.

By now, the entire forest should have been dyed with the blood of the students losing their lives at the hands of his followers, as well as the Phantom Soldiers who had been programmed to eliminate them.

But his subordinates were rushing to talk to him through their special communication artifact, and all of them were saying the same thing.

“What is happening?!”

Vaan didn't know the answer to their question, so he decided to go and investigate.

He headed to one of the red crystals that he had buried in the ground and began digging.

He found the crystal, but something else caught his eye.

Right beside the red crystal was a blue magic crystal. Its surface was embedded with countless runes that gleamed with a ghostly light.

“This... What the hell is this?!”

The frown on Vaan's face deepened. He could tell that the blue crystal had overwritten the command spell he had imbued on the red magic crystal.

Even if he destroyed the blue magic crystal now, it wouldn't matter. The red one was already pulsing with identical runes.

"That is what you call all part of the plan."

Vaan did not recognize the voice, but he could hear the smile in it. Indeed, when he looked behind him, he saw a young man with short silver hair leaning casually against a tree, clearly entertained.

"Who are you?" Vaan demanded, glaring at the stranger.

The young man's smile grew wider. "I am Renard Vale," he replied. "The strongest First Year in the academy."

If Renard had known that his club president was using his name to stir up this kind of trouble, he might have—very understandably—gone ballistic and beaten the crap out of Alex until he couldn't remember his name.

Unfortunately for Renard, he was currently busy eliminating the Demon Worshipers. This was part of the plan that the members of Endless Horizon had discussed before the Battle Royale.

"Renard Vale." Vaan summoned a spear and pointed its tip at the young man. "How much do you know?"

"Everything," Alex answered, unfazed by the killing intent that was oozing out of Vaan's body. "Even the fact that you tricked this young man—err, lady into believing that you will help her regain the former glory of her noble household."

After hearing the young man's reply, Vaan's expression immediately changed.

The Renard boy was talking to him as if he truly understood everything!

But since Vaan knew that what was happening was being broadcasted to the entire academy, he didn't affirm or deny anything.

He simply decided to attack Alex and silence him before he ran his mouth more!

The sound of metal hitting a shield spread in the surroundings.

"Did I touch a nerve?" Alex asked in a teasing tone.

"Is that really how you should speak to a young lady?" Vaan asked.

"You're right," Alex replied. "My bad."

Alex took a step forward and used his shield to bash Vaan, but the latter was quick on his feet and managed to distance himself at the right moment.

The two clashed again and again. Vaan unleashed a flurry of spear strikes that could only be seen as a blur.

However, Alex now had two shields strapped to his left and right arms and could block every strike with precision.

"Vaan, are you really fine with this?" Alex asked, his voice suddenly solemn. "To let someone take over your life as you watch him do bad deeds using your name and face?"

Vaan sneered as he continued his relentless attack, sending sparks flying everywhere.

"Vaan, are you really unable to do anything?" Alex shouted. "Are you fine with what is happening?!"

“Shut up!” Vaan roared as he unleashed a spear strike that sent Alex skidding back several meters.

“Good.” Alex lowered his shield and smiled kindly at the beautiful youth who seemed to have regained a bit of clarity and control.

Unfortunately, that clarity soon vanished, replaced by a look of annoyance that contorted the teenage boy’s pretty face.

“You talk too much.” Vaan’s killing intent intensified as he started to channel Aura on his body. “Time for you to die.”

“Sorry, but that’s not going to happen,” Alex replied. “I came here for only one thing, and that is to save Vaan. “You are the one who should die, you sick b*tch!”

Alex knew that one of the Elders of the Demon Worshipers was possessing Vaan.

She had been entranced by Vaan’s feminine looks and had decided to take over his body and make it her own.

She delighted in showing Vaan the crimes that she had committed using his body in order to break his heart and soul.

Of course, she also promised that she would restore Vaan’s family to their former wealth and glory. She even vowed to make the family’s name resound across the Kingdom of Avalon until every child knew who they were.

That was the only thing that bound Vaan and the Elder together.

Since Vaan believed that he didn’t have the power to restore his family’s former glory, he had surrendered his body to the Demon Worshiper despite her obvious sadism. He knew that she enjoyed seeing him, the owner of her vessel, suffer.

“Vaan, do you still not see?” Alex pressed. “Do you still believe that what she is doing will help you and your family rise up once more? I know you’re not stupid, so why are you letting her take over your life?”

“It’s useless you dumb punk!” Vaan answered. “Just die already!”

As the two fought against each other, screams started to reverberate through the forest.

“Do you hear that, Vaan?” Alex asked, unrelenting. “Those are the subordinates of this b*tch, and all of them are going to die like the pathetic worms that they are.”

The Demon Worshipers had planned to use a gravity spell to immobilize the students and leave them without a means to fight back as they were massacred.

However, since Alex had known about this, he had asked Nessia to make adjustments to the spell.

Thanks to Nessia’s intervention, the Demon Worshipers and the Phantom Soldiers were now affected by the gravity spell as well.

This made them unable to resist the one-sided beating from the members of the Endless Horizon Club.

Vaan stopped attacking for a moment to listen to the screams around him.

Alex had to admit that his opponent really looked like a cute young lady from every angle. He wouldn’t have suspected a thing had he not known better.

“Why don’t we make a deal?” Alex proposed. “Leave Vaan’s body and escape. That way, the Headmaster will not be able to interrogate you. How does that sound?”

Vaan didn’t reply, simply turning to look at Alex in disdain.

The screams of her followers did not stop. She understood that their plan had been truly foiled by a brat.

"I see. So you are the Headmaster's dog," Vaan stated. "I knew that something didn't feel right because Calem suddenly disappeared. You captured that Copycat freak, huh?"

Alex smiled faintly because he didn't take part in Calem's capture.

Professor Gareth had noticed that his "son" was suspicious and had pummeled him to oblivion until the latter broke apart.

"I will take your silence as a yes." Vaan twirled his spear, transforming it into a death scythe. "Since it has already come to this, there's no use holding back."

Vaan's hair grew longer, and her eyes glowed with power.

Although their main plan had been thwarted, she had still one trick up her sleeve.

But before she activated the insurance she had planted long ago, she would first kill the irritating bastard in front of her by destroying his soul. Even if his body was ejected from the forest, it would become a vegetable because it no longer had any soul inside of it.

Alex knew the power of the Elder possessing Vaan, and frankly, he was feeling a little anxious despite his calm appearance.

Damage to the soul was a serious injury and couldn't be healed by ordinary healing potions.

However, he did have a plan to stop the Elder from overpowering him.

Unfortunately, there was one condition.

The real Vaan had to help him by preventing the Elder from fully controlling his body.

As long as he was given an opening, Alex was confident that he would be able to save the pitiful young man, whose innocent heart was being corrupted by the Demon Worshiper, who only cared for his body and soul.

Chapter 227: The Second Oath [Part 1]

Many believed that money was the source of all evil.

I would beg to disagree.

It wasn't money.

It was greed.

Humans could have everything, yet they would still always want more of something.

And sometimes, they didn't care what method they used in order to get what they wanted.

Whether it be money, women, resources, or anything of value, the common emotion behind all of this was greed.

But greed wasn't the only deadly sin in the world.

As powerful as greed, there was envy.

Perhaps, envy had to come first before greed could manifest.

When people see their peers have something they do not have, they can't help but feel envious.

These two emotions were probably the reason why the Damne Viscounty had fallen.

It was not because we were envious of others or greedy for more.

No.

It was the opposite.

Our neighbors grew envious of us and thirsted over our status and lands. They wished to take what we had and make it their own.

And these noble families banded together in order to force us into submission.

When our ancestor had been made a Viscount, the King had granted him a plot of mere barren land.

The territory was at the edge of a frontier, which the Kingdom had believed was of no use to them.

But humans were very good at adapting and coming up with solutions.

And the first Viscount of the Damne Family had been a very, very resourceful person.

He had prioritized building canals, reservoirs, cisterns, and wells. Thanks to the improved irrigation, the land had slowly but surely developed. Eventually, it had become suitable for farming.

What had once been barren became a thriving region after three centuries of hard work.

People praised him. Even the King had to acknowledge that he had underestimated my great-great-grandfather.

As such, our family led a relatively happy and peaceful life.

That was until our neighbors started coveting our lands.

They resorted to banditry and petty crimes that slowly ate up our lands and hurt our people.

They framed our family with crimes that we had no knowledge of.

We asked the kingdom's officials to mediate, but they were corrupted to the core. They understood that they could get a share of the pie if they simply turned a blind eye and, thus, supported the noble houses who wished to take over our land.

The current King had been so sick to the point of being bedridden. He was obviously not aware of what was happening at the northernmost edge of his kingdom, where our family was located.

My father asked for an audience, but only the Crown Prince would meet with him.

Promises were made...

And promises were broken.

The Damne Family endured, endured, and endured more until the fateful day that I was born.

With great hardships, my mother gave birth to me, perishing not long after.

My Father and Grandfather knew that I was the last hope of our family. And to keep me safe, they hid my gender.

They declared to the world that a daughter had been born.

What the noble families didn't want to see was an heir who might miraculously turn things around.

If the child were a boy, his life would be one of constant danger as assassins after assassins attempted to end the Damne Bloodline. After all, a baby was easier to kill than an adult.

But what if the child were a girl?

Most Noble families regarded their daughters as nothing more than bargaining chips that could secure alliances. Useful, but not indispensable.

Ever since I could remember, I had been treated as a girl.

Dressed in fancy clothes, I learned etiquette, household management, and other skills “proper ladies” ought to have.

The Noble families bordering our lands were very eager to have their children marry me, so they could legitimately get their hands on our lands.

They all believed I was of no threat to them for I was a girl.

In their eyes, the only worth I had was to give birth, extending their lineage, and bless their children with my ancestors’ land.

This tightly guarded secret was maintained for sixteen whole years.

But due to one drunken mistake, the secret was exposed.

By one of the noble sons in a party I attended, the secret was exposed.

At a party with other scions, a young man tried to intoxicate and assault me, believing that he could then pressure me into marriage with threats of public shame and disgrace.

He succeeded in doing the first part.

Unfortunately, when he planned to do the deed, he noticed that the two of us had a few things in common.

Yes.

Both of us were boys.

But after his initial shock subsided, he decided to use this to blackmail me.

As such, I was finally engaged to someone.

And that was the heir of the Montclair Viscounty.

Still, their greed knew no bounds.

They started to get impatient. They thought my father and grandfather were too long-lived. And so, the Montclairs poisoned the Damne Viscount and his son, leaving me as the only successor of the house.

Then they went ahead and set the date of the marriage while placing me under house arrest.

However, my nursemaid, who had served me loyally since I was born, sacrificed herself in order to let me escape.

As long as I was alive, they wouldn't be able to claim my lands as their own. Without me, they would never have the legal right to do it.

So I ran.

I ran desperately.

But Fate liked to play with people in mysterious ways.

I collapsed somewhere. When I woke up, I found myself being nursed to health by a beautiful woman.

She listened to my troubles, held me when I cried, and promised me that everything was going to be alright.

“Do you want revenge?” she asked.

“Yes!” I answered without hesitation.

“Then what price are you willing to pay?” she asked once more.

“What do you want?” I asked back.

“I want your everything,” she replied.

I was desperate, young, and naive.

Like a boy trapped inside a well, I reached out to grab the rope that was tossed in my direction.

“I will give you my everything. So please, reclaim what I have lost and punish those who have schemed to bring about the downfall of my family!”

The deal was set.

The promise was made.

And then...

I lost control of my body.

The beautiful woman, who called herself Willow, kissed me. It might have been an alias, but I didn't dwell on it.

Willow said she wanted my body, and I agreed to it.

But I misunderstood her.

She didn't plan to treat me as a bed warmer or a slave.

No.

She wanted my body in a literal sense, and I gave her permission to take it.

Unable to resist, I felt myself falling back into that well.

Deep in that dark and empty place that was deprived of everything.

After that, I fell asleep for an unknown period of time.

When I woke up again, I saw myself doing things I would have never done on my own.

I killed people.

There were people whom I wanted to kill, but what horrified me was that the victims were not enemies I wanted to retaliate against.

They were innocent civilians.

“So, you’re awake?” Willow asked. “Did you see how I killed this little girl? Did you see her confusion as blood seeped out from her chest after I stabbed her with a dagger?”

I saw it.

I saw everything.

And hated every second of it.

What I didn’t know was that Willow was breaking my willpower and spirit, so soon, I wouldn’t be able to resist her.

Sometimes, she did attack and kill someone from the Montclair Family, giving me hope that she was a woman of her word.

But after doing it twice, she never did it again.

Instead, she murdered innocent people, using my face, using my voice, using my everything to charm, entice, seduce, blackmail, persuade, and coerce.

My soul and willpower, which weren’t strong to begin with, began to falter. I no longer had the power to defy her.

As such, I experienced hell even before I died.

And now, I was again about to murder more innocent people. This time, they were the students of Frieden Academy.

The place where I had once wanted to attend so I could make friends and learn skills that would allow me to reclaim what I had lost and bring back the glory of the Damne Family. But that was a distant dream.

Willow made sure to tell me how she was going to kill the first student she came across in great detail, making me feel numb inside.

I had already seen countless deaths. However, every time I felt her emotions running wild, I would still fantasize about someone killing this body so that she wouldn't be able to use it to hurt others again.

Someone!

Anyone!

Please, kill me!

End my suffering!

"Sorry, but that's not going to happen," a young man with silver hair said with a smile. "I came here for only one thing, and that is to save Vaan. You are the one who should die, you sick b*tch!"

"Vaan, do you still not see? Do you still believe that what she is doing will help you and your family rise up once more? I know you're not stupid. So, why are you letting her take over your life?"

Yes. I was stupid.

I did not wish for her to take over my life, but it was already far too late.

I could no longer do anything.

'I'm sorry for being weak,' I thought sadly. 'I'm sorry for existing!'

It was then when the young man spoke once more.

“Vaan, I know that you can hear me. I’m sure you must be feeling terrible now since you can’t do anything. But don’t worry. The storm will always pass. Even the darkest nights eventually give way to dawn.

“You don’t have to fight right now. You don’t even have to move. Just breathe. That’s enough. That’s more than enough. Because every breath you take is defiance. Every heartbeat is proof that you’re still here.

“And if you’re still here... then you still have a chance. You’re not weak, Vaan. You’re just hurt. But pain doesn’t mean defeat, it means you’ve endured.”

For some reason, the young man’s words made me feel something that I thought I had lost long ago.

And that was...

Hope.

“Please, save me,” I said with everything I had. “Please, wake me up from this nightmare!”

The young man looked surprised, but this surprise quickly faded and he smiled again. This time, it was a kind and reassuring smile.

“Hang on tight, Vaan,” the young man replied. “I swear that I will save you. I’ll punish this b*tch for taking something that doesn’t belong to her.”

I watched as the young man raised his sword and pointed it at the heavens.

“I’m sorry, but I lied earlier,” the young man admitted. There was a lump in my throat, and I feared he was as sadistic as Willow. “My name isn’t Renard Vale. It is Alex Stratos. And I hereby declare under my name that I will save you, Vaan Damne. And this is my Second Oath as the Oathkeeper.”

At that moment, I saw something that made my cold heart beat once more.

Dark clouds had already covered the heavens, and yet, a ray of light broke through.

This ray of light shone upon the young man, bathing him in a radiance that made him look like one of those Knights I had read about in my treasured storybooks.

A knight that would fight the evil of the world and do everything in his power to make sure that the innocent and powerless would no longer have to cry ever again.

Chapter 228: The Second Oath [Part 2]

“This is my Second Oath as the Oathkeeper.”

Alex knew that the Oathkeeper was no ordinary Job Class.

Dim Dim had explained to him that it was a Profession that made one stronger by making an Oath.

With every Oath he upheld, Alex would become stronger. That was the so-called shortcut for bringing out the Job Class’s full potential.

But this was just a shortcut, not a miracle.

Making an Oath was a very serious thing. Alex couldn’t just spam random, trivial Oaths to become strong.

It must be an Oath that the world would recognize.

His First Oath was to help Charles Lambert clear the Dungeon of Beginnings.

It was a feat that was deemed impossible by nearly all the players of ELO.

He could have turned away.

He could have forgotten.

Yet, he decided to defy the fate that was meant for Charles because he believed that this wasn't the ending that he deserved.

If Alex had survived the Dungeon of Beginnings without Charles, his Oath would have been broken.

That was how serious an Oath was. It was more than a simple promise, and it didn't care if he'd tried his best. He had to uphold his Oaths, and the penalty for failing meant becoming an Oathbreaker.

And now, he made his Second Oath.

Not because he simply wished to get stronger, but because he genuinely wished to save Vaan.

The young man knew that Willow was strong.

In fact, Willow was the first Mini Boss of the first Arc of the story.

The first challenge that Alex needed to face in the academy.

And frankly, he alone would not be able to defeat her.

She was an Elder of the Demon Worshipers.

What did that mean?

It meant that her Rank was at least 6 or 7.

A Rank that Alex was unable to defeat with his current strength.

However, there was a catch.

The current Willow could only manifest her power up to Rank 5.

Why?

It was because of the preparations that Alex had done.

Not only had he managed to greatly limit the power that Willow could unleash, but he had also succeeded in making the other Demon Worshipers experience four times the normal gravity of Arcana.

Four times the gravity might not seem much, but in reality, this was something that was very hard to resist.

If some unfortunate soul were to find themselves in a place where gravity had been multiplied six-fold, they would probably die not long after.

That was how serious the debuff that was being cast on the Demon Worshipers at the moment.

This made them sitting ducks for the members of Alex's Club, who were cutting through them with as much effort as it took to steal candies from babies.

— —

< The World has acknowledged your Oath >

A voice spoke directly inside Alex's head as a ray of light descended from the heavens and bathed his entire body.

< Oathkeeper, you are now going to receive three random buffs. >

— Your Defense will increase by 100%

— Your Speed will increase by 100%

— Your Stamina regeneration will increase by 100%

Alex could feel his body getting stronger as the three-layered buff took effect. But something else caught his attention.

A blue window screen appeared in front of him, informing him that he had unlocked a hidden quest.

— — —

< Hidden Quest Unlocked! >

Mission Name: Wish of the Fallen.

Objective: Save Vaan Damne

Rewards: ????

— — —

Alex had barely finished reading everything when he was forced to block the spear thrust that Willow had unleashed in his direction.

The blow was strong enough to push the young man back several meters away. Willow was now taking this battle seriously, and he would be an absolute fool to not match her attitude.

Her Rank had shot up to the Fifth Rank, unable to rise any further.

This unexpected development made Willow frown, but since she was in Vaan's body, even her frown looked cute in the eyes of the spectators watching the battle.

Alex felt his left arm—which was holding Everguard—go numb for a brief moment due to the force of Willow's attack.

'As expected of a Mini Boss. She is strong,' Alex thought. 'But I can manage. Time to fight seriously.'

Alex tapped his shield with his sword as if that was some kind of special command.

A moment later, his entire body was covered in armor. But this armor was not ordinary armor.

It was the Oathbound Set.

The Armor Set that Alex had received after clearing the Dungeon of Beginnings with Charles, thus upholding his First Oath as the Oathkeeper.

— — —

< Oathbound Armor Set >

“For those who swear with blood and shield, whose strength lies not in power—but in promise.”

— — —

< Oathbound Helm >

“May your eyes stay clear—even as the world turns grey.”

Type: Helmet

Stats: Constitution +5, Intelligence +5, Damage Reduction +5%

Effect: Reflects incoming physical damage by 5%

< Heartwarden Plate >

“Let blades strike, so others need not bleed.”

Type: Chestplate

Stats: Constitution +10, Strength +10, Damage Reduction +20%

Effect: Reflects incoming physical damage by 5%

< Gauntlets of Silent Resolve >

“The hand that lifts others bears the heaviest weight.”

Type: Gauntlets

Stats: Strength +5, Dexterity +10, Damage Reduction +5%

Effect: Reflects incoming physical damage by 5%

< Blade of the Bound Vow >

“A blade that sings only when the heart stays true.”

Type: One-Handed Sword

Stats: Attack +140, Strength +10, Constitution +10

Effect: Deals 30% bonus damage to enemies targeting allies.

Passive: While fighting to protect a party member below 50% HP, gain +10% Attack Speed.

< Mantle of the Last Oath >

“Even should you fall—the promise lingers on the wind.”

Type: Cloak

Stats: Constitution +10, Agility +5, Damage Reduction +5%

Effect: Reflects incoming physical damage by 5%

< Set Bonus Effects >

[2 pieces]

Oathkeeper's Step – Movement speed +10% when moving toward an endangered ally (below 50% HP).

[3 pieces]

Sacrificial Stand – While blocking or intercepting attacks for an ally, gain 15% reduced damage.

[4 pieces]

Sworn Justice – Critical hits against enemies who attack your allies deal 25% more damage.

[5 pieces]

Final Vow – Heart Unbroken

— If Alex receives fatal damage, he will instead survive with 1 HP and become invulnerable for 10 seconds. This passive skill has a cooldown of 48 hours.

— Reflects incoming physical damage by 10%

— — —

Alex's red cape fluttered in the wind as he stood in his battle regalia.

The Professors and the students observing him through the magical monitors couldn't help but regard him with awe because he truly looked imposing in his armor.

He was like a young King about to head to battle to protect his people.

Alex was still a Rank 2 Oathkeeper, but that was fine.

He had made his Oath, and the world had answered his call.

His battle regalia did not simply look glorious. It would also make enemies specializing in physical attacks feel pain due to its passive reflection damage.

This was his trump card and his last resort. He had saved it for a strong enemy he couldn't beat otherwise.

And since Willow was a strong enemy, Alex had no intention of holding back.

If he wished to save Vaan and survive this battle, he must go all out from the start.

Raising his shield in front of him, the young man took a step forward. His voice, filled with determination, spread through his surroundings.

“Shield Charge!”

Alex turned into a golden comet as he charged against his foe, who wished nothing more than to fill the young man's body with bloody holes using her spear.

“Reaper's Wrath!” Willow didn't back down and used her deathscythe to hack the incoming fool who thought he could defeat one of the Elders of an organization who desired nothing more than to dye the world in the color of blood.

Chapter 229: The Wicked Don't Die Young [Part 1]

The attacks of a Rank 5 Demon Worshiper Elder and a Rank 2 Oathkeeper—heavily buffed by an Oath recognized by the world—clashed at the center, resulting in a deafening impact.

Shield Charge had always been one of Alex's foolproof main offensive attacks, and it had served him well before.

Unfortunately, he was up against someone who was more than double his rank. Even with buffs, the difference in stats was staggering. At most, his current strength was that of a Rank 3 Oathkeeper.

As such, the exchange between the two ended in Alex being sent flying backward, crashing through several trees.

A glance was enough to tell who had the upper hand now. However, a groan escaped Willow's lips, for she wasn't left completely unscathed by that collision.

Alex's Oathbound Armor Set had one special feature—it reflected any physical damage that he received from his opponent.

As a complete set, it gave Alex a passive 30% Damage Reflection.

But it didn't end there.

After Everguard's reforge, it retained its original skills, one of which was called Aegis Riposte.

— — —

< Everguard (Reforged) >

“You hold it not because you are unafraid—but because someone has to be brave.”

< Aegis Riposte >

— Upon blocking a melee attack, Everguard reflects a small portion of the damage back at the attacker.

— Reflects 5% melee damage for each successful block.

— When the Oathkeeper enters a seriously injured state, Aegis Riposte will get an upgrade, and reflect 50% melee damage for each successful block.

Note: It is more than a shield. It is the promise that the new Oathkeeper made, and the weight he will bear until the end.

Alex knew he was no match for his opponent, but so what?

As long as he had Everguard, he was willing to trade blows with his enemy.

After all, sure, he'd get hurt, but he would certainly not be the only one.

Not to mention, if he was hit by a blow strong enough to seriously injure him, the reflection damage he dealt would jump drastically to 80%.

The young man, who had been blown away by such a powerful attack, propped himself up from the ground.

His left arm hung limply by his side.

Even moving it slightly brought him extreme pain. It affirmed his suspicion that the bones on his left arm were broken.

'Her Deathscythe might be a Super Rare or Unique Weapon,' Alex thought. 'As expected of a Mini Boss. She lives up to her reputation.'

Even right at the start, he had no real shot at winning. But Alex hadn't come to this hopeless battle unprepared.

In fact, he was overprepared for this possibility.

Taking out a purple vial from his storage ring, the young man chugged the potion like a sports drink.

This potion alone cost him five thousand academy points, which was quite expensive.

However, it wasn't an ordinary healing potion.

It was a Greater Rejuvenation Potion, which activated fast regeneration of the body's cells.

It could heal even broken bones, although not instantly. It would still need some time to take full effect.

But that was fine.

Alex didn't want his injury to be healed completely since he wanted to keep his reflection damage at 80%.

All he wanted was a major boost in passive healing, so even after receiving the other party's beating, his body would still be healed, albeit slowly.

After consuming the potion, the young man gritted his teeth and forced himself to take a step forward.

He was in so much pain that he wanted his opponent to feel the same!

Everguard disappeared from his left arm as he transferred it to his right.

Raising his shield in front of him, Alex charged towards Willow, who thought that the pain she felt earlier was merely a result of the skill that her opponent had used against her.

“Shield Charge!”

Some of the students who were watching the battle, especially the girls, covered their eyes, not wanting to see the outcome of the young man’s desperate struggle.

Still, the majority watched as Alex put his life on the line to fight against a Demon Worshiper who had invaded their academy. They couldn’t bring themselves to look away as Alex valiantly took his last stance.

Disdain and contempt flashed across Willow’s face as black flames covered her deathscythe.

“Courting Death,” Willow sneered as she unleashed one of her strongest attacks that would put an end to this farce. “By shadow’s toll, I claim your soul!”

“Eternal Culling!”

An attack that threatened to split the young man in half descended upon him with fury.

But Alex didn’t back down and faced it head-on.

The moment they clashed again, a powerful shockwave exploded outwards, uprooting all trees around them for hundreds of meters.

At the same time, two screams of pain reverberated through the surroundings as both Alex and Willow were thrown back by the force of their attacks.

The young man crashed through the trees, leaving a line of destruction in his wake.

The same could be said for Willow, who felt as if her very soul had been sliced in half.

It was a pain she had never experienced before. Despite being a battle-hardened warrior who was more powerful than Alex, the pain brought her to tears.

Alex coughed out mouthfuls of blood. His right arm was bent into a strange angle.

That attack could have instantly killed him, but the Oathbound Armor Set had some powerful passive abilities that guaranteed that he wouldn't be insta-killed even if he were to face the strongest attack in the world of Arcana.

Final Vow – Heart Unbroken

— If Alex receives fatal damage, he instead survives with 1 HP and becomes invulnerable for 10 seconds. This passive skill has a cooldown of 48 hours.

— Reflects incoming physical damage by 10%

Final Vow.

That was Alex's life-saving skill that prevented him from dying.

Even when he was crashing through the trees, this skill protected him, keeping him alive due to his Invulnerable State.

But that wasn't all. It also reflected 10% of the damage he received from physical attacks, boosting his reflection ability to 90%

A 90% damage reflection was almost the same as getting hit by the full attack that Willow had unleashed against him.

Alex was no longer able to move, with blood seeping from nearly every pore of his body.

But even from where he was, he could hear Willow's screams. Shrill as they were, they sounded like music in his ears.

This was the only thing that kept Alex awake despite the overwhelming pain that washed over his body.

A moment later, a little white bun appeared beside his head, holding a white potion in its hands.

Dim Dim carefully poured the potion into the young man's mouth as Alex could no longer move a muscle.

This potion cost ten thousand academy points, and Alex had handed it to the little bun as an insurance for the worst-case scenario.

Lapiz, whom Dim Dim had accompanied after leaving Alex's side, looked at the young man with a conflicted expression.

She had watched as Alex fought against the Demon Worshiper possessing Vaan's body.

Dim Dim had explained everything to her and asked for her help.

After Alex finished drinking the potion, Lapiz knelt beside him and pressed her hands on his chest.

She then used the power of nature to speed up his recovery.

However, the injuries he received were not only physical. His soul also received some damage.

Chapter 230: The Wicked Don't Die Young [Part 2]

A day before the Battle Royale, Alex had used his last remaining Academy Points to buy the expensive Body and Soul Healing Potion in preparation for his fight against Willow.

As he had handed it to Dim Dim, he instructed his partner to only feed him the potion if the time was right.

Heeding his words, the little bun waited until Alex had dealt a decisive blow to the enemy, who had no idea that her opponents had thoroughly taken everything into account, including her fighting prowess.

But the potion alone was not enough to give Alex a true recovery.

Fortunately, someone with Nature Magic could help him. Coincidentally, there was one First Year who had it—Lapiz, the Elven Princess.

Her Nature Magic was capable of boosting the effects of the two potions that Alex had drunk, making them twice as powerful!

After the young lady was done administering first aid, the pain Alex felt decreased considerably. However, it was not entirely gone.

“Lapiz, please help me stand up,” Alex said through gritted teeth.

He wanted nothing more than to knock himself unconscious and sleep through this ordeal. Unfortunately, he couldn't do that.

Willow was still not defeated and must be dealt with before she found an opportunity to escape.

Alex must end her here or suffer the consequences at a later time.

“You should just lie down and rest,” Lapiz replied softly but seriously. “You're still seriously injured.”

"I know, but the battle is not yet over," Alex answered. "Besides, I made a promise."

The young lady glanced in the direction of the shrieking Willow. She was bleeding so much that even her black clothes had taken on a reddish tint.

She had also received damage to her soul, and the injury was driving her into a frenzy.

"Please, Lapis," Alex pleaded. "I still need to save Vaan."

Lapis didn't know if she should listen to him or not.

Just moving him might worsen his injuries, so she was hesitant to let him have his way.

But as the young elven lady was having an internal battle, she heard some footsteps heading in their direction.

"Who's there?!" Lapis took out her bow and aimed at the newcomer, a young man whose fists were covered in blood.

"You look pitiful, President," Renard said in a tone that was somewhere between teasing and mocking.

"Shut up and pick me up," Alex answered. "Or else, I'll kick you out of the club."

"Tsk!" Renard clicked his tongue but he helped Alex get to his feet.

If Alex had threatened to expel him from Endless Horizon yesterday, Renard would not have hesitated to leave.

But it was different now.

After this incident, he knew that their Club would surely become the focus of the academy.

Renard wasn't someone who liked fame and attention.

However, after meeting Alex, he realized that the silver-haired young man was a very mysterious person.

Just like Lapiz, he had been nearby and had witnessed the battle between Alex and Willow.

Renard couldn't help but break in cold sweat as he watched the battle.

He put himself in Alex's shoes and knew that he would have died if it had been him who fought against the Demon Worshiper since her strength far surpassed any of the First Years inside the forest.

And yet, Alex fought against her.

Despite the overwhelming difference in strength, he held his ground.

That alone made Renard feel his blood boil and his heart beating fast.

He was someone who liked fighting, but he was not the type to fight hopeless battles. Watching Alex made him realize that sometimes, there were battles that one shouldn't run away from.

Even though he still didn't like Alex, a part of him respected him now.

"Let's go." Renard supported Alex's body so he could walk.

Lapiz followed behind them with Dim Dim perched on top of her head.

The Dim Sum God paid close attention to their surroundings, making sure that nothing would ambush its partner in his vulnerable state.

It took a while, but they finally arrived at the writhing and groaning teenager. Blood seeped from the corners of his lips and eyes.

“Y-You! How are you still alive?!!” Willow shouted in disbelief and anger. “How are you still alive?!”

“Don’t you know that famous saying?” Alex replied. “The wicked don’t die young. They endure, fester, and outlive saints.”

“You wicked thing!” Willow screeched as she tried to stand up. Unsurprisingly, she failed and fell, lacking the strength to move.

The only thing she could do was squirm on the ground and curse at the top of her voice in anger and pain.

“It’s time to leave Vaan’s body, Willow,” Alex declared. “You lost.”

“Hahaha!” Willow started to laugh. “If I’m going to die, I’m taking Vaan with me! You will not separate the two of us!”

“I see. So you still refuse to acknowledge your loss,” Alex said. “Renard, let me sit down. After that, you and Lapiz back off for a hundred meters.”

“But it’s dangerous.” Renard frowned. “You cannot defend yourself right now.”

“Don’t worry. Just trust me,” Alex insisted.

Renard’s frown deepened, but he decided to trust the young man.

But just to be safe, he moved Alex ten meters away from Willow before helping him lower himself to the ground.

“Are you sure about this?” Renard asked one more time.

“Yes,” Alex answered. “Don’t worry. She won’t be able to hurt me.”

Renard nodded and did as Alex had instructed while signalling to Lapis to do the same.

Dim Dim wanted to stay, but after Alex told the little bun of his plan, it fled to where Lapis and Renard were without a backward glance.

Alex didn’t know if he should laugh or cry at his partner’s decisiveness.

After taking a deep breath, he looked at Willow, who was clawing the ground as she dragged her body towards him.

“I’ll kill you!” Willow hissed as she crawled. “I will kill you!”

Alex took another deep breath and activated the Divine Skill he received from the Tone Deaf God.

The skill was none other than the Voice of the End.

A haunting voice escaped Alex’s lips. The moment it reached Willow’s ears, she flinched.

What followed next was wails of utter agony.

The Demon Worshipper’s body convulsed despite her many wounds, for the voice she heard was like that of countless nails scratching against a chalkboard, only a thousand times—no, ten thousand—worse.

Willow's soul possessed Vaan, but her real body was safe within the Demon Worshipers' Headquarters.

However, Alex wouldn't allow such a dangerous individual to escape. It didn't take a genius to understand that she would do everything in her power to kill Alex and his friends if she managed to get away from this battle.

This was something that he would never allow to happen!

A Rank 5 Demon Worshiper was already strong enough to kill Alex many times over.

A Rank 7 Demon Worshiper who wanted to take revenge on him was an existence that he didn't want to face, no matter what.

So, Alex sang.

He sang his heart out.

He might no longer be able to wield a sword or use a shield to bash his enemy, but he still had a skill that didn't need him to move and was strong enough to exorcise evil spirits!

The students watching Alex and Willow frowned in confusion, unable to comprehend what was happening.

"Hey, did someone turn the sound off?" a Second Year asked.

"I can see that First Year moving his lips, but I can't hear what he is saying," a Third Year commented.
"Can someone fix this?"

The students started asking for the magical screens to be fixed so they could hear what Alex was saying.

That way, they would be able to understand what was happening.

The Headmaster of the Academy, Rowan, smiled faintly. He was the one who had turned the volume all the way down to zero.

As the headmaster, he had to take care of his students' well-being. He had failed to protect some of his staff, but he would never let the students suffer... at least not under his watch.

Professor Arienna had already informed him about Alex's "hidden talent." In her words, it was "potent enough to cause irreparable psychological trauma."

To ensure that no one else would be able to hear Alex's singing, the Headmaster even controlled the "space" where Alex and Willow were, artificially creating some sort of soundproofing so that only those within the effective range of the skill would hear the young man's singing.

The Headmaster stared unflinchingly at the squirming and screaming Demon Worshiper, only sighing in relief when tendrils of black smoke finally escaped Vaan's lips.

Alex had successfully exorcised Willow's evil spirit. When Vaan next woke up from this never-ending nightmare, he would be a free man once more.