

Endless 231

Chapter 231: The Battle Of The Unbroken Oath

“Looondon bridge is falling down~ falling down~ falling down~”

“Ahhhhhhhhh!”

“Looondon bridge is falling down, my fair lady~”

“AHHHHHHHH!”

Willow’s desperate, pained, soul-sucked screams were drowned out by Alex’s singing like an unstoppable tsunami.

Even with Lapis’s Nature Magic boosting the two potions he had consumed, the young man was still in a world of pain. He was also truly exhausted, so he struggled to think of a song to sing as he felt his consciousness slip away.

However, he had made an Oath, so he chose a song that didn’t require much effort, so he wound up singing the nursery rhyme song, London Bridge.

“Buuuild it up with wood and clay~

Wood and clay~ wood and clay~

Buuuild it up with wood and clay~

My fair lady~”

“STOOOOP SINGIIIIIIING!” Willow writhed like an earthworm sprinkled with salt as she tried to cover her ears to block out that damned song.

However, this was a Divine Skill.

How could she possibly nullify the effects of a skill the Tone Deaf God himself had personally bestowed upon his chosen one just by covering her ears?

The pitiful Demon Worshiper grew more and more desperate as she felt the injuries to her body and soul worsen with each passing second.

It was as if her limbs were being torn from her body. There was no end in sight.

She liked torturing people, but getting tortured was something that she didn't want to experience.

Although her body wasn't being cut, pierced, or punctured by torture tools, the suffering she was experiencing at the moment was second to none.

'I have to escape!' Willow clenched her jaw as she decided to give up this fight, for she had no other way to survive.

She didn't know why, but the young man's singing also dealt even more damage to her already injured soul.

"I'll remember youuuuuuuuuu! Aleeeeeeeeeex Stratooooooooooooooooooooos!"

With a hateful scream, Willow finally relinquished her control over Vaan's body.

But that was a mistake.

When Alex saw her leave Vaan's body, he sang even louder, causing a flock of birds flying over the Mistral Weave Forest to fall to the ground, where they remained as they twitched and spasmed.

“Looondon bridge is falling down~ falling down~ falling down~”

“London bridge is falling down~, my FAIR LAAAAAAAAAAAAAADY~”

The moment Willow’s soul lost her vessel, the full power of Alex’s song manifested and assumed the form of a giant fly swatter.

It then swatted down as if trying to kill a pesky insect that had been buzzing around him for a long time.

“N-NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!”

The fly swatter slammed on Willow’s soul like a ton of bricks, pinning her to the ground.

Of course, things didn’t end here. It would have been too merciful to Willow, had that been all.

The giant fly swatter had the power to exorcise souls, so the Demon Worshiper found herself being purified.

In her last moments, she saw someone precious to her reaching out their hand to hold her.

“It’s fine now.”

The voice was soft, and the Elder of the Demon Worshipers felt herself being embraced in warmth.

“You no longer have to suffer and make others suffer.”

An ethereal sigh of relief escaped Willow’s lips as her soul turned into particles of light and rose up to the heavens.

The corruption of her soul was purified, as if all the sins that she had committed in the past were forgiven.

Alex coughed a mouthful of blood and finally stopped singing.

He had finally reached his limit.

Just as his body was about to collapse on the ground face first, someone broke his fall and held him firmly.

“Thank you.”

Those were the first two words that Alex heard as Vaan, who was also wounded, held him tightly.

“Thank you. Thank you very much for saving me.”

The teenage boy sobbed, his body shaking as he held onto Alex.

Despite the pain he was feeling, Alex wrapped his left arm around Vaan’s body and used his right to lightly pat his head.

“You endured well,” Alex said as he fought off the strong urge to close his eyes and sleep. “It’s normal to make mistakes. You’re not in the wrong. It just so happened that you accepted help from the wrong person.”

Alex held back a groan as Vaan hugged him tighter.

But the young man still needed to say a few words so that Vaan’s broken heart could start healing.

“Vaan, it’s okay to take one small step at a time,” Alex said softly as he continued to pat the teenage boy’s head. “Even if your feet tremble, even if you fall down again... the important thing is to get up and keep walking forward. Life is a journey, and your journey has just begun.”

Vaan’s shoulders trembled, his tears soaking through Alex’s cracked Oathbound Armor.

“I thought it was the only way I could return the glory of my family,” Vaan whispered. “I thought Willow would really help me. But all I did was bring ruin to many innocent lives.”

“No,” Alex interrupted, his voice weak but firm. “She brought the ruin. Not you. Do you understand?”

The winds in the forest stilled as if the Mistral Weave Forest itself was holding its breath to witness this moment.

“Willow is gone,” Alex stated. “Her soul is purified and has now ascended into the heavens.”

Vaan pulled back just enough to look at Alex’s face. “Then... Am I really free?”

Alex gave a slight nod. “You’re free, Vaan. And from now on, you get to choose who you want to be.”

Vaan opened his mouth to speak, but the only thing that came out was a broken cry.

He buried his face in Alex’s shoulder again, this time not from fear or guilt but from overwhelming relief.

His body rocked once more, as if all the shackles that had bound him all this time were finally shattered, setting him free.

Lavinia watched this from far away before glancing at Nessia, who was right beside her.

“Are you sure he’s a boy?” Lavinia asked. From her point of view, all she could see was a pretty lady. hugging Alex as if he was the Knight that had saved the Princess from the Demon Lord.

“What’s wrong?” Nessia replied in a teasing tone. “Feeling jealous?”

Lavinia didn’t reply and simply looked back at their club president, who had once again suffered because he wanted to save others.

‘I need to get stronger.’ Lavinia clenched her fists as she looked at Alex’s from afar.

The young man’s armor was soaked in his own blood, but there he was, still trying to comfort Vaan despite his own pain.

Seeing him like this made Lavinia feel sad, especially after knowing what kind of person Alex was.

The young man was usually all smiles and goofing around.

But when it came to important matters, he would always be on the frontline, standing tall and proud.

He would not hesitate to shield others from the pain, despite knowing that the one who would get hurt was him.

The magical screens in Frieden Academy regained their sound after Alex had stopped singing.

The observing students were now able to hear the young man’s words, making some of them look at his pitiful form with admiration.

But the majority only had one thought in mind.

“Damn, this guy is a simp!”

“Trying to act cool in front of a pretty girl? PTUI!”

“Tsk! He’s very good at using pick-up lines. Saving the damsel in distress is the guaranteed way to make her fall for him!”

Many single guys cursed Alex internally. After all, the one crying and hugging him was a pretty lady!

None of them knew that Vaan was actually a guy since even his voice sounded feminine.

A good distance away, an actual young lady with sun-kissed skin and long blonde hair looked at Alex and Vaan. Her expression betrayed her internal struggle.

She was none other than Evangeline. From her vantage point, this was the perfect opportunity to eliminate Alex and Vaan.

The battle royale was still not over. The counter above the forest showed that fewer than fifteen students remained inside the forest.

Only ten survivors were needed for the competition to end, so eliminating two powerless students would dramatically improve her chances of being in the top ten.

But she couldn’t bring herself to do it.

“Willow...” Evangeline muttered faintly. “You looked so happy in your last moments.”

Her eyes glowed, but she forcefully stopped her emotions from running wild.

She gave Alex and Vaan one last glance before running in the opposite direction.

Evangeline had already seen Lapiz, Nessia, and Lavinia, but her instincts were telling her that she shouldn’t underestimate these ladies.

Because of that, she went to look for easier prey, so this event could finally end.

'I'm sure that person will be furious after he realizes that Willow is truly gone,' Evangeline thought. 'But that's not my problem anymore.'

And with that, she disappeared into the forest, planning to finish the hunt that had been momentarily stopped by the Demon Worshipers until they were eliminated by the members of Endless Horizon.

After they had been dealt with, the demon worshipers turned into beams of light, which flew directly to a special domain belonging to the Headmaster of the Academy.

He would personally interrogate these survivors and make sure to get as much information from them as possible.

Half an hour later, the Battle Royale finally ended. It would go down in the history of the academy as the Battle Of The Unbroken Oath.

Chapter 232: There Is No Such Thing As Happy Endings

The faint spring breeze blew through the window of the infirmary room, brushing through a young man who was covered in bandages like a mummy.

Only his hair, eyes, nose, and lips were visible.

He was sleeping peacefully.

In fact, he was sleeping too peacefully.

It had been three days since the Battle Royale had ended, but Alex had still not woken up from his coma.

Napping soundly on top of his chest was a little bun who had stayed by his side all the time.

Suddenly, a haze of color entered the room and materialized to form the beautiful fox lady. Lotte, Latifa's second consciousness, had been visiting Alex daily.

It was subtle and only obvious to those who knew her well, but she was beginning to form her own distinct personality.

Dim Dim sensed her presence and opened one eye to greet the fox lady, who lightly patted its head.

"He still hasn't woken up?" Lotte asked.

"Dim."

"Your partner sure likes to sleep, huh?"

"Dim."

Lotte smiled tenderly before sitting down on the bed to look at the unconscious man. He was not just wrapped in physical bandages but also bound by spiritual bandages.

Alex had suffered not only physical injuries but also soul injuries.

Although he had received first aid from Dim Dim and Lapis, the twin nurses—Lin and Rin—had deemed that it would be best to play it safe. They had wrapped Alex's body with the spiritual bandages to speed up the recovery of his body and soul.

They also believed that the reason why Alex had still not woken up was because his soul hadn't been healed completely.

"I hope this kid wakes up soon," a young nurse with silver-white hair streaked with blue commented as soon as she saw Lotte. "The infirmary is filled with gossipers who are desperate to see him. They are a pain to deal with."

Her twin, who looked almost identical to her, sighed helplessly.

“There are even people who pretend to be sick or injured themselves because they intend to sneak into this private room after we admit them,” Rin complained.

If not for the streaks of violet in her hair, Lotte would not be able to tell her from Lin.

“Our club is also suffering difficulties at the moment.” Lotte smiled wryly. “There are too many people applying to Endless Horizon. The members cannot make any decision since Alex is still sleeping.

“Frankly, I hope that we won’t have too many members. I like the tight-knit group we have right now.”

“So exclusivity then?” Lin grinned. “Are you going to become like those Crest Clubs who have ridiculous requirements for aspiring club members?”

“I’m not sure,” Lotte answered. “Everyone is waiting for Alex to wake up so he can clean up this mess. That’s also our default response whenever anyone asks us about joining. We tell all of them to wait for Alex to wake up.”

But there was one person they had allowed to enter the clocktower as a reserve member.

They believed that if Alex was still awake, he would not hesitate to accept her—errr, him to their club.

That person was none other than Vaan Damne.

The same person whom Alex had given his all to save in the Mistral Weave Forest.

Countless preparations and contingency measures had been made to rescue him, so everyone in Endless Horizon believed that among the hopeful applicants, Vaan alone had the right to become a reserve club member even before Alex regained consciousness.

In fact, Nessia had already added Vaan's name to the list of people who could access the clocktower and enter their club room.

Just as the three ladies were talking, they heard a knock on the door.

"Ugh... I hope that it's not one of those pesky brats again," Rin mumbled before walking towards the door.

She only opened the door slightly and looked through the gap, wary and annoyed. However, upon seeing who the visitor was, her expression quickly softened, and she opened the door wider, allowing entry.

"Thank you."

A soft and soothing voice spread inside the room as a pretty lady—errr boy, entered.

His ponytail was kept in place with a ribbon tied in a bow, and his purple eyes were bright and clear.

Although Lotte had seen him many times, she still struggled to believe that this beautiful creature was actually a boy.

Of course, only the members of Endless Horizon knew his true gender.

The rest of the academy still thought that Vaan was a lady. His number of admirers had even shot through the roof after everyone had seen him weeping beautifully in Alex's embrace.

In fact, just a glance was enough to tell that the beautiful lady—errr, boy seemed to have undergone a complete glow-up.

His skin had gotten smoother and more radiant. His eyes also sparkled with liveliness.

His long black hair gleamed like silk, while his lips were pinker than the cherries that Fran grew on her farm.

Lotte couldn't help but smile as she remembered accidentally eavesdropping on Lavinia's and Nessia's conversation. The young catkin had asked Nessia to confirm if Vaan was really a boy.

Nessia had giggled in response before telling a pouty Lavinia that all she needed to do to dispel her doubts was to ask Vaan directly.

That had been good advice. When Vaan had visited the clocktower a day ago, Lavinia had seized the opportunity.

"Vaan, are you a boy or a girl?"

That was the question that Lavinia had asked.

And Vaan's answer had been...

"I'll leave the answer to your imagination."

His answer had amused everyone. Everyone, of course, except Lavinia, who had only given him a long and hard stare before deciding to drop the subject.

In the end, Vaan's gender had become "unknown."

It was also Endless Horizon's first inside joke.

"How is he?" Vaan asked as he approached the sleeping young man.

"Still asleep," Lotte replied.

"I see..." Vaan looked at Alex sadly before sitting down on the bed to hold his hand.

In the eyes of others, she really looked like a girlfriend who was very worried about her boyfriend!

Meanwhile, somewhere else in the academy...

"Why didn't you do anything to help her?"

An accusing voice of a man reached Evangeline, who was currently inside her room.

"And why should I?" Evangeline retorted. "I already told you that I don't want to get involved in anything that you guys do while I'm in the academy."

She looked at the crystal ball on top of her table defiantly, as if telling the man reflected on its surface that he shouldn't blame her for his failure.

"... Fine."

The man said after a few minutes of silence had passed.

"However, remember this—you cannot remain as a bystander for a long time. After all, we share the same blood."

The young lady remained calm and stared at the man in the crystal ball coolly.

"Are you done?" Evangeline asked. "If so, we can end this talk now. I still have things to do."

"You're becoming more stubborn, Eva," the man commented. "You really are your mother's daughter."

Instead of feeling insulted, Evangeline raised her chin if she was proud to be called her mother's daughter.

The man stared at her for nearly a minute before ending the call.

Only after she was sure that he was truly gone did she breathe a sigh of relief.

She then returned the crystal ball to her storage ring and left the room.

As she walked down the hallway of the dormitory, she passed by several students giggling as they discussed the handsome knight who had come to save the raven-haired lady from the possession of the Demon Worshipers.

Just like most ladies their age, they fantasized about romance as well as having their very own Prince Charming.

"Fools," Evangeline muttered under her breath after she had walked out of their earshot. "There is no such thing as happy endings."

As someone who had experienced it firsthand, she knew that these fantasies were only something that the inexperienced dream of.

She was too old to believe in romance stories and too jaded to feel love for others.

Those who had been exposed to the harshness of reality and society already knew that true love and true happiness only existed in the fairy tales that most girls her age loved to read.

Chapter 233: A Date To Remember [Part 1]

"Wake up, sleepyhead. How long do you plan to sleep?"

A soft, familiar voice reached Alex's ears. He hadn't heard it for a long time, so as soon as it sounded, he slowly opened his eyes.

His gaze then landed on the face of a young lady who was about a year younger than he was.

Her long, silky black hair and her beautiful brown eyes were exactly how he remembered them. She was looking at him with an amused smile, which made his heart skip a beat.

"Guildmaster," Alex muttered.

"Yes, it's your Guildmaster. Someone who took the train for nearly an hour just to meet you," the young lady replied. "And... your apartment is just as messy as ever. Are the rooms of men always this messy?"

"Not all," Alex answered groggily. "There are decent ones among us who actually know how to clean their rooms. Unfortunately, I'm not one of them."

An exasperated sigh escaped his visitor's lips before she moved closer to him. She then reached out to hold his hand, only to pull him off the bed.

"Time to wake up, princess," the young lady declared. "Let's clean up your room a bit before I cook you breakfast. I don't want to eat in a pigsty."

"How harsh," Alex grumbled. "It's not a pigsty."

"Shut up, pig," the young lady scoffed. "Wash your face and help me clean your room."

"Yes, Your Highness." Alex's tone was sarcastic, but he was grinning.

A smile also tugged at the corner of the young lady's lips. Even her eyes were smiling, which made the young man's heart slam against his ribcage.

'Am I forgetting something?' Alex wondered as he allowed himself to be pulled out of his bedroom.

For some reason, he felt that he needed to be somewhere else. And yet, being here with his guildmaster felt so normal.

She visited his home at least once a week to ensure it remained habitable, as well as to feed him—she cooked in big batches, freezing the rest so he could eat at least one proper meal every day.

The two then worked together to clean up the apartment. Halfway through, the young lady left to start cooking, leaving Alex to finish the rest.

After finishing, the young man tied up the trash bags and carried them out. On his way, he noticed a big paper bag sitting atop the kitchen counter. By the looks of it, his Guildmaster had stopped by the market to buy ingredients to cook for her lazy, sloppy Shield Savant.

As Alex came back from tossing the trash out, he heard singing coming from his apartment.

His Guildmaster was singing the song Golden by Huntr*x, and she was hitting the high notes just fine.

'Right, we did a duet of Free last week, and it's from the same movie,' Alex thought. 'Maybe we can go to a karaoke bar at lunchtime.'

Going to karaoke bars was already a firm part of their routine. But since it was just the two of them every time, Alex sometimes felt like they were going on a date.

Of course, Alex was quick to clear his head of that notion. Many had tried to pursue their Guildmaster, but every attempt failed. Until now, she had remained single.

Even so, everyone's guards were up. The men in Endless Horizon, their guild, had even vowed that if any guy were to make their guildmaster cry, they would put his legs in cement and throw him into the sea to feed the fishes.

Alex was one of those guys. He vowed that he would beat the crap out of anyone who would hurt the one person who made him feel that he was not alone in a world where reality seemed too harsh for people like him.

When she saw him enter, she beckoned him to join her in singing the chorus of the song.

Alex knew that refusing was not an option, so he joined her in singing the chorus.

“We’re going up, up, up

It’s our moment

You know together we’re glowing

Gonna be, gonna be golden.”

“Oh, up, up, up

With our voices

Gonna be, gonna be golden.”

“I’m done hidin’, now I’m shinin’

Like I’m born to be.

Oh, our time, no fears, no lies

That’s who we’re born to be~”

The young lady held Alex’s hand, and the two of them danced as they sang the song till the very end.

For a brief moment, he forgot the nagging feeling at the back of his head and simply enjoyed the moment.

Although magic didn't exist on Earth, being with her was always a magical moment for him.

If some miracle like money raining from the sky were to happen when they were together, he wouldn't be the least bit surprised.

Half an hour later, the two of them sat on the dining table and ate the young lady's cooking.

"So, how is it?" the young lady asked.

"Ten out of ten," Alex answered without hesitation. "Whoever marries you, Guildmaster—he might have saved a universe in his past life."

A giggle escaped the guildmaster's lips as she looked at Alex with a bright smile.

"Does that mean you saved a universe in your past life?" the young lady asked.

Alex almost choked on his food, but he used brute force to chew it properly before swallowing with great difficulty.

"Guildmaster, stop teasing me. I almost got isekai-d because of you."

"It's Noelle, Alex. How many times do I have to tell you to call me by my name when it's just us?"

Right.

Her name was Noelle.

Alex's Guildmaster and the second lady he trusted—maybe even loved—in his life.

As a healthy young man, it was very hard to have a beautiful girl like her around him, especially inside his room, where it was only the two of them.

However, he never asked her out. He didn't even dare to ask her why she always visited a guy who lived an hour away from her by train.

He never dared, fearing that if he brought it up, this... dream would finally come to an end.

"What's wrong?" Noelle asked. "Why are you spacing out?"

"It's because I saw a beautiful lady in my dreams," Alex answered.

"Oh?" Noelle arched an eyebrow, and her gaze turned threatening. "And who is that beautiful girl? Is it someone I know?"

For some reason, Alex felt that his next words would decide whether he lived or died. Because of this, his brain went into overdrive as it scrambled to find a way out of this mess.

Then it hit him.

A safe answer!

"Um, I'm talking about my four Queens," Alex replied. "Y-You know, in the game?"

"Ah... them." Noelle nodded.

The tension in the room slowly dissipated, but it was not entirely gone.

“You know, I can understand guys liking game characters, idols, actresses, and superstars,” Noelle said. “I have a few favorites as well. But, Alex, keep it in moderation, okay? Your trashcan is halfway full of tissue pape—”

“Koho! Koho!” Alex coughed loudly, stopping the young lady from finishing whatever she was going to say.

His guildmaster and guildmates knew the identities of his four Queens because of a random topic in their guild chat.

One of the guild members had asked the guys who their top Queens were and told everyone to post their answer on their guild page under their own Character Portraits.

Almost everyone had given the names of their favorite ladies and explained why they had chosen them.

Wanting to highlight his Queens, Alex hadn’t held back. His explanation had ended up becoming an essay explaining why his Queens were the best ladies in the game.

His seriousness had amused his guildmates.

Noelle had made sure to read everything, but she hadn’t said anything. However, she secretly played ELO using a female character and romanced the ladies whom Alex had called his Queens.

In ELO, it didn’t matter what gender a character was.

The game promoted “Endless Possibilities”, so there was no issue even if a player wanted to romance a character of the same gender as their avatar.

After clearing the story mode a few times, Noelle had informed Alex that out of his four Queens, she liked Latifa the most.

The sleeping beauty’s romance route was extremely hard since, well, she was mostly asleep.

It had taken Noelle some time to understand that in order to unlock Latifa's route, she must first have a good relationship with her other consciousness, which Alex had named Lotte, Lumi, Lulu, and Lala.

While Alex's naming sense was not the best, Noelle had decided to use these nicknames as well. Surprisingly, she had found Latifa's route to her liking.

After eating, Alex did the dishes, while Noelle cleaned the table.

When both were done, the young lady asked Alex if he wanted to go to their preferred karaoke bar with her.

Naturally, Alex agreed because he was none other than the Karaoke King... right?

Chapter 234: A Date To Remember [Part 2]

As Alex and Noelle walked their way to their destination, strangers they passed by eyed the young lady with admiration.

"Damn, what a lucky guy."

"That is a real babe. I wish my girlfriend were as beautiful as her."

"I don't think they are a couple. Look, they're not holding hands."

Alex was already used to this. He had gone out with Noelle multiple times, and there was not a single time she had gone unnoticed.

Nearly everyone would do a double take whenever she walked past them. Frankly speaking, walking beside her made him feel a little proud—even smug. After all, strangers tend to assume she was his girlfriend, often inciting jealousy among men.

But this time, one of the guys was correct.

They weren't a couple, and the lack of hand-holding as they walked side by side made that clear.

Just as Alex was about to sigh in his heart, he suddenly felt something soft in his right hand.

This made his body stiffen, realizing Noelle had intertwined her hand with his.

Alex may look calm on the surface, but he was doing a fist pump internally.

When they arrived at the karaoke bar they visited once a week, the manager instantly recognized Alex and Noelle.

"Room for two, right?" the manager asked with a smile. He then called out one of his staff members and asked her to bring the young lady and young man to their usual room.

Noelle would always make a reservation in advance before visiting Alex, so there was always room for them every time they went to the karaoke bar.

In fact, she always rented the room for half a day, ensuring no one could interrupt her quality time with the young man whose face was now beet red.

Even the tips of Alex's ears were red. He was truly flustered—this was the first time Noelle had held his hand.

Obviously, he had no plan to file any complaints.

"Seriously, why is the number of this room 69?" Alex asked the question that had always bugged him. "Also, why is there a heart-shaped bed in this room?"

This time, it was Noelle's turn to blush. She had the same thought as Alex.

Why would the manager have this kind of room in a karaoke bar? Clearly, the room could host twenty people with no problem, yet they put an out-of-place bed that took up unnecessary space.

“Maybe the bed is for tired customers who want to take a nap after singing?” Alex commented.

“I think you’re right.” Noelle nodded.

This was the only explanation that the two of them could think of at the moment.

With that out of the way, the two ordered some snacks and picked their favorite songs.

Singing with Noelle always made Alex forget the worries that crept in whenever he sat alone, wondering what he wanted to do with his life.

He was still young, but there were moments when he couldn’t help imagining what his future might look like at thirty, forty, even fifty years old.

All he knew so far was that, just like everyone else, he wanted to have a family.

A wife and kids who would call him Dad, Daddy, or Papa.

One time, he had jokingly asked Noelle to call him Papa. When she had obliged, she had melted his heart there and then.

An hour later, the two took a break from their singing.

They ate their snacks, drank their drinks, and chatted about random things.

However, it didn’t take long before their topic shifted to ELO.

The two then talked about their next Dungeon Raid, as well as their strategy for fighting the World Boss that would spawn in a few days.

Whenever they talked about the game, Alex and Noelle would always dissect effective strategies for tackling the bosses that they would face.

Getting it clear lowered the risk of failure as well as minimized the wasted resources used by the raid parties.

An hour later, the two went back to singing. However, they paused when more food arrived.

“Guildmas—err, Noelle, did you order champagne?” Alex asked after seeing the champagne bottle that was delivered to them.

“Yes,” Noelle answered. “I want to try it just once.”

“You’ve never had champagne?” Alex arched an eyebrow.

“Never.”

Alex couldn’t help but smile at the thought of sharing one of Noelle’s first times together.

He had drank champagne once during a party, so this wasn’t his first time drinking it.

The two made a toast and drank at the same time.

“This brand is better than the one I drank,” Alex commented after he had a good taste of the drink.

“Yes. It’s better than I expected.” Noelle nodded.

The two drank and chatted some more.

An hour later, the two finally left the karaoke bar as Noelle was starting to show signs of being drunk.

Considering her state, Alex hailed a taxi to take them back home. When they arrived at his block, he had to help the young lady out of the cab and to his apartment.

He had forgotten that someone could get easily drunk from champagne.

Fortunately, neither he nor Noelle was a scandalous drunk who would lose all inhibitions and assume a new personality once intoxicated.

Alex's mind was still clear as he helped the young lady lie down on the bed.

He also planned to sleep, but he had the decency to move to the sofa so that he would not disturb his guildmaster's rest.

But just as he was about to leave, the young lady grabbed his hand.

"Stay with me," Noelle said.

"But Noelle..." Alex gulped as he looked down on the beautiful young lady, whose face was flushed due to intoxication.

"It's fine," Noelle insisted. "This isn't the first time we slept together, you know?"

She was right.

This wasn't the first time that they had slept together.

Nothing had happened between them. They had just slept side by side.

Alex hadn't been able to sleep right away. After all, it was impossible for a young man to not think of the beautiful lady beside him.

Through sheer willpower, Alex had been able to pull through back then.

But now, he wasn't sure that his will would remain strong.

After all, he was drunk. All it would take was a single touch or a single kiss, and the dam would break.

Just as Alex was about to say no, his gaze landed on the table right beside his bed.

There, a limited edition Dim Dim plushie seemed to be looking at him with a knowing smile.

Suddenly, realization dawned on him as the memories of his world of Arcana flooded into his mind.

Half a minute later, Alex looked down at the young lady, who was still grasping his hand.

"Noelle," Alex said softly as he raised her hand to his lips.

This act turned Noelle's face a shade redder. She hadn't expected that Alex would kiss her hand like a knight who was pledging his loyalty to his princess.

"What's wrong?" Noelle asked. "Is this a side effect of getting drunk?"

Her playful yet seductive voice reached Alex's ears, making the latter smile faintly.

"Maybe," Alex replied, a little sadly.

“Is there something wrong?” Noelle could tell that Alex’s mood had suddenly changed.

Alex didn’t reply right away. Instead, he placed Noelle’s hand over his chest, as if wanting to make her feel his wildly beating heart.

“Noelle, I regret it...” Alex said quietly. “I regret not telling you how I felt when I had the chance. I regret not thanking you for everything that you did for me when we were together.

“Don’t you know? I always look forward to the days of your visit. The moments we spent singing, eating, and talking together—they are my most treasured memories.”

Alex could feel his eyes moisten. His regret over not being able to say goodbye to her weighed in his heart whenever he was alone and had time to think of the people he had left on Earth.

He had no family and was an orphan.

But there was one person dear to him.

And he was holding the hand of that person right now.

“Many think I only had four Queens in my heart, but in truth, I had five of them,” Alex confessed.

Seeing that she might misunderstand, Alex continued quickly, preventing her from saying anything.

“My fifth Queen is not a character in ELO.” Alex smiled. “She’s always there for me when things get rough. She would help clean my room when I couldn’t be bothered to do it. She would also cook for me once a week. And she was always there when I just wanted to talk about my problems.”

Alex kissed the back of Noelle’s hand a second time before looking straight into her eyes.

"Noelle, I regret not telling you how much I like you," Alex continued. "I'm not sure if this is love because I have never loved before. But if there is one person that I want to spend my life with, it is you."

Alex could feel it.

That the end of this dream was near.

So, he told her everything that he had been holding back in his heart. He wanted to tell her directly how grateful he was to her.

"Alex," Noelle said in a serious tone as she pulled the young man into her embrace and patted his back. "You should have told me that before you disappeared."

"I'm sorry," Alex replied. "It was so sudden... I never expected it to happen."

"Then you have to make it up to me." Noelle cupped the young man's face and gazed tenderly at him.

"How?" Alex asked. "We can no longer be together."

Since this was a dream, he said whatever he really felt.

"Alex, what does ELO represent?" Noelle probed.

"Endless possibilities," Alex answered in a heartbeat.

Yes.

Endless possibilities.

That was the concept of ELO.

“Right,” Noelle nodded. “So, maybe... this isn’t really a dream, you know?”

“Huh?!” Alex looked at the young lady, who was hugging him in surprise.

Seeing his reaction, Noelle couldn’t help but giggle as cracks formed in the room around them.

The walls, the ceilings, the floor... Everything was starting to crack, which meant that it was about time that he woke up.

“Alex, do not forget what you have told me right now,” Noelle reminded gently. “I will always be your fifth Queen.”

“I won’t,” Alex promised firmly. “I won’t forget.”

“Good.” Noelle smiled faintly before moving closer to the young man.

She then pressed her lips over his neck and sucked on it, making Alex flinch.

Alex had a vague idea of what she was doing, and it made his heart slam itself against his ribcage.

Noelle finally pulled back and looked at the mark she had left on the young man’s neck with some satisfaction.

She then smiled lightly before giving Alex’s lips a quick peck that lasted only a second.

“Bye, Alex. I wish you all the happiness this life has to offer.”

As soon as those words were spoken, the world around him finally crumbled, and the sleeping young man in the infirmary finally opened his eyes for the first time after nearly a week.

Chapter 235: So, Maybe... This Isn't Really A Dream, You Know?

The first thing that Alex saw when he opened his eyes was a little white bun sleeping peacefully on his chest.

Seeing Dim Dim sleep made Alex smile faintly. However, as if sensing that the young man was awake, the Dim Sum God yawned before opening its eyes.

"Good morning, Dim Dim," Alex said.

Dim Dim was still half asleep, so a few seconds passed before it realized that Alex was already awake.

"Dim Dim!" Dim Dim also greeted Alex, but instead of saying good morning, it said good evening instead.

The young man then glanced at the window and noticed that the light from outside was nearly orange, which meant that the sun was slowly descending below the horizon.

Alex then propped himself into a seating position and noticed that he was in an unfamiliar place.

The next thing he noticed were his hands.

They were covered in bandages. He blinked.

Seeing his confusion, Dim Dim took out a mirror from its dimensional storage and placed it before him to help him understand that his hands weren't the only parts of him that were bandaged.

When the young man saw that even his face was covered, a feeling of anxiety crept over him.

A quick check and he noticed that not only was he wearing patient attire instead of his own clothes, but that his entire body was bandaged like a mummy.

“Excuse me for a bit, Dim Dim,” Alex said as he took off his patient’s clothes with the intention of removing the bandages all over him.

But he didn’t need to do that manually. The moment he wished to remove the bandages, the bandages started to unravel themselves on their own.

In the first place, the bandages were magical. Since they had fulfilled their purpose, they removed themselves from Alex’s body.

A moment later, a young man was stark naked. He began examining his body to see why the nurses had practically mummified him.

He even asked Dim Dim to take out a full-length mirror—the Dim Sum God happily complied—so that he could see his back.

But while the young man was in the middle of inspecting his body, the door of the room opened, and four ladies came in.

Lin, Rin, Lavinia, and Vaan entered the room, still in conversation.

Since Alex had been in a comatose state all this time, they didn’t bother to knock and just entered the room like usual.

But what greeted them was not an unconscious Alex on the bed, but an Alex—who was very much awake—standing in the middle of the room before a huge mirror while wearing his birthday suit.

They froze.

As if on cue, the two teenagers’ gazes all moved to Alex’s lower body, where an energetic Little Alex greeted them.

“Oh my...” Vaan cupped his cheeks and blushed after seeing how lively Little Alex was.

Lavinia's expression remained calm, but her face was quickly turning beet red.

She forced herself to raise her gaze, but Alex's lean and toned body was a temptation too!

Lavinia liked strong men and Alex's well-trained body was not merely eye candy but a sumptuous feast for her eyes.

The twin nurses were the only ones who didn't seem bothered by Alex's nudity.

"You're finally awake," Lin said as she approached Alex, who immediately covered Little Alex.

"What are you doing?" Rin asked in amusement. "My sister and I already saw it when we bandaged your body. So, what's the point of hiding? Unhand it so we can start your examination."

"Like hell I would!" Alex replied. "Get out, while I get dressed!"

"Men are supposed to be brave and bold," Lin stated. "Why are you being so wishy-washy? Um, what is that on your neck? A hickey?"

"Huh?!"

Lavinia and Vaan, who had politely looked away, whipped their heads back when they heard those words.

The two walked closer to Alex, who had shifted his gaze back to the mirror.

His eyes widened in surprise. The small bruise was on the exact spot that Noelle had kissed him in his dream!

“H-How...” Due to his surprise, Alex nearly forgot that there were four ladies in the room with him. He reached to touch the bruise on his neck to see if it was real or not and inadvertently left Little Alex exposed.

However, Little Alex remained unadmired.

Lavinia and Vaan were now more interested in checking the hickey on Alex’s neck instead of looking at other places.

“Did any other people enter the room while I was sleeping, Dim Dim?” Alex asked the Dim Sum God, while still looking at his reflection.

Dim Dim shook its head. “Dim.”

As Dim Dim had very rarely left Alex’s side during his coma, it would know if someone had tried to take advantage of him when he was in a defenseless state.

Moreover, since he had been almost-fully covered in bandages, it would’ve been nearly impossible to leave such a mark on his neck, unless it had been done forcefully.

“So, maybe... this isn’t really a dream, you know?”

Those were the words that Noelle had told him before the collapse of his dream world.

‘But how?’ Alex’s face turned solemn after the memories of the young lady surfaced inside his head. ‘Was that really a dream?’

Alex found it hard to believe that a young lady from Earth could somehow end up in Arcana just to give him a love bite.

Besides, with Dim Dim watching over him, it would know if a stranger had entered his room.

Even without Dim Dim, that also would have been a very hard thing to accomplish.

The Headmaster had placed Alex in a subspace that was under his control.

No one, except for the people that he approved of, would be able to enter Alex's room.

Professor Rowan knew that there were spies and followers of the Demon Worshipers inside the academy.

After what had happened in the Mistral Weave Forest, he wouldn't be surprised if they tried to assassinate Alex while he was unconscious.

To prevent that from happening, the Headmaster had placed several layers of protection inside and outside the young man's room to keep him safe.

Lin and Rin were the only ones aware of the Headmaster's preparations. They too found it weird that someone had managed to give Alex a hickey in a place that was supposed to be the safest in the academy at this point in time.

The young man only broke out of his daze when he sensed something cold touch his back and chest.

The twin nurses, both wearing stethoscopes, were listening to the young man's heartbeat and breathing in order to check if there were any abnormalities inside his body.

"Heart rate is normal," Lin said.

"Lungs and breathing are normal too," Rin reported.

The two nurses then used their magical abilities to further scan and check Alex's body, even asking him to stop moving so that they could do their job.

Alex sighed and obeyed, except that he continued shielding Little Alex with his hands.

“Hey, do you want me to remove this hickey on your neck?” Lin asked, pointing at the small bruise on Alex’s neck.

“No,” Alex replied before he could even stop himself.

He still didn’t know how it was possible. But if this was proof of his connection with Noelle, he wanted to keep it with him a little longer.

“Are you sure?” Rin inquired.

“Yes,” Alex answered. This time, he was able to answer calmly.

Seeing that he looked like he really didn’t want the bruise to be healed quickly, Lin and Rin let the matter rest and informed him that he was now well enough to leave the infirmary.

As if remembering their duties, the two nurses dragged Lavinia and Vaan outside so that Alex could change.

When he was finally alone, the young man sighed and sat on the bed to lightly pat Dim Dim’s head.

“Dim Dim, is it possible for someone on Earth to leave a mark on me here in Arcana?” Alex inquired.

Dim Dim was the encyclopedia of the world of Arcana, so it knew what was possible and what wasn’t.

The Dim Sum God didn’t even need to think about it and firmly shook its head.

“Dim!”

“Then, do you have any idea how this happened?”

“Dim.”

The Dim Sum God shook its head once more because it really had no idea where Alex’s hickey came from.

In the end, Alex was left with a nagging feeling at the back of his head that what he had experienced might have been a special kind of dream.

A dream where his soul had traveled between the border of two worlds, allowing some sort of phenomenon to happen.

Alex knew that this sounded far-fetched, but he couldn’t think of another explanation for this miracle

After getting dressed, the young man left his room and was escorted back to the Ironheart Dormitory by Lavinia and Vaan, who couldn’t help but give the visible mark on his neck side-long glances.

Chapter 236: The Aftermath Of The Battle Royale

“You traitor!” Chuck glared at Alex, whose only response was to look fed up. “How dare you get kissed while you are sleeping?! Is that what you call a special room service?”

“Dude, get a grip,” Alex replied. “I just woke up. I have no idea how this happened to me.”

Lavinia, Vaan, Charles, and Nessia were all inside room 13 because they couldn’t talk in the Common Room of the Ironheart Dormitory.

Alex was like a celebrity now, so many people would definitely want to listen to anything about him.

“Confess, Vaan.” Chuck glanced at the pretty lady—errr boy who was sitting on the chair that Alex used when he was writing something on his desk. “You’re the one that left that love bite, right?”

Everyone in the room turned to look at Vaan, but he only smiled mischievously.

“Who knows?” Vaan replied.

Lavinia frowned, but she had already secretly talked to Dim Dim earlier, and the little bun had confirmed that Vaan hadn’t done anything of that sort to an unconscious Alex.

Since that was the case, she believed that Vaan was just trying to mess with Chuck, who didn’t know if he should laugh or cry because Alex had gotten kissed while asleep.

“Hmph! And you also didn’t try to hide the evidence of your betrayal,” Chuck stated. “You’re no longer part of the Singles Club!”

Alex wanted to say that he didn’t want to be part of the Singles Club anyway, but he refrained.

Instead, he counter-attacked using facts.

“Look who’s talking?” Alex scoffed. “Between the two of us, who is the one with a fiancée?”

“Touche.” Chuck clicked his tongue because Alex got him good.

“Okay, let’s stop this silly banter and tell our club president what has happened after the battle royale concluded,” Nessia stated.

This was the information that Alex had asked of her upon his return to the dormitory. However, since many other students were also present, he decided to tell everyone that he was still not feeling well and headed back to his room.

When the room finally quietened down, Nessia told Alex the conclusion of the Battle Royale.

“Many complained that the result of the Battle Royale should be invalidated because an outside force had infiltrated the academy with nefarious goals of killing the First Years inside the Mistral Weave Forest,” Nessia began.

“Critics from outside the academy were also blaming the Headmaster for allowing the criminal organization of the Demon Worshipers to endanger the lives of the students. Even some Professors asked the Headmaster to reconsider. But Professor Rowan’s declaration shut everyone up.”

Nessia smiled faintly as she quoted the exact words that Professor Rowan had said during his press conference.

“The reason why Frieden Academy exists is to train Heroes that will rise up to protect the weak and the innocent from criminal organizations all over the world. What happened in the Battle Royale of the First Years is the perfect example that those with bad intentions can strike anywhere and anytime.

“And you know what? Even in that situation, I was very happy that my students rose up to the occasion and fought against these evildoers. They even won against the infiltrators, which proved that the academy is indeed the place where Heroes are born.

“I’m not here to train greenhouse flowers. If any of the students, as well as the public, think that they can enter the walls of the academy to have a good time then they are very wrong.

“We regularly encourage our students to take on many missions, including the defense against Monster Stampedes, Dungeon Outbreaks, as well as dealing with criminal organizations.

“Facing danger is part of our curriculum. If any of you have a problem with that then don’t bother enrolling here. Lastly, if any noble or those in a position of power criticize how I do things then don’t ask me for help when evil comes knocking on your door because I will just laugh at your suffering.”

Rowan Vademont was a Paragon.

An existence that had surpassed the 9th Rank. One of the thirteen true powerhouses of the world.

If he wished for it, he could obliterate an entire kingdom by himself, and no one would be able to do anything to stop him.

Simply put, he was strong, and could say anything he wanted.

Do you dare to go against a Paragon?

Do you have the guts?

Have you paid your life insurance in full?

Have you already prepared your custom built coffin?

After making his statement, the press and the critics all shut up.

This was the authority of a Paragon that no one dared to challenge.

Only a Paragon of equal or greater power could fight a Paragon, and only thirteen of them were present in the world.

As such, nobody who wasn't a fool or one of the twelve Paragons could challenge Professor Rowan. Background, education, lineage, connections all didn't matter.

However, Professor Rowan did make a concession. He increased the number of survivors from ten to fifteen.

Alex, Charles, Renard, Chuck, Lavinia, Nessia, Latifa, Vaan, Fran, Finn, Lapiz, Princess Xenia, and three more people became the final fifteen survivors.

They personally received generous prizes from the Headmaster. Each was richer by ten thousand academy points.

“Also, we are getting many member applications since Chuck shamelessly made an advertisement during the award ceremony four days ago.” Nessia glanced at Chuck, who was currently admiring the ceiling of their room as if it was an artwork made by a famous artist.

Clearly, the teenage boy was pretending that had no idea what Nessia was talking about.

Instead of getting exasperated, Nessia simply smiled before turning her attention to Vaan. “Although it is presumptuous of me, I accepted Vaan’s application. Of course, if you have a problem with that, you can ask him to leave anytime.”

Vaan then looked at Alex as if she—errr he was a lost puppy, who had no owner.

“You did well, Nessia,” Alex replied. “I don’t mind having Vaan as a member of our club.”

“Yes!” Vaan did a fist pump before running to hug Alex, which made the corner of Lavinia’s lips twitch.

“Thank you, Alex!” Vaan exclaimed with a big smile on his face. “I’ll follow you for life even if you get married!”

“... That’s pretty scary.” Alex blinked. “I think that’s a threat.”

“It was just a joke.” Vaan smirked. “But do not forget. Jokes are always half true.”

Alex sighed and lightly patted the teenage boy’s shoulder, making the latter reluctantly take a step back.

“By the way, Alex, there is one more person that wishes to join our club. She is very hard to refuse.” Chuck scratched the back of his head. “It’s Princess Xenia.”

“Oh...” Alex pondered for a bit before nodding. “Sure, she can join.”

“Really?” Chuck did a second take because he had thought that Alex would be against the Princess joining.

“Really.” Alex nodded in affirmation. “Having her as a club member gives our club many benefits, so why would I turn her away? Besides... I don’t mind becoming your wingman, Chuck.”

“Huh?” Chuck blinked. “What are you talking about? What wingman?”

The teenage boy looked really confused, which made Alex roll his eyes.

Whether Chuck and Princess Xenia broke their engagement or not wasn’t really his problem. But, at the very least, he was certain that the two had really taken the step to become friends after wrapping up the fishing competition.

Just as they were about to continue discussing their club activities, they heard someone knocking.

“I’ll get it,” Chuck said as he walked towards the door. “It might be one of my fans.”

The teenage boy smiled as he confidently opened the door.

However, when he saw the visitor, he slowly shut the door. This time, he made sure to lock it, but his distress only earned amused smiles from his club members.

Chapter 237: Finally, We Have A Golden Goose In Our Club

“Chuck, who was that?” Alex asked with a mischievous smirk on his face.

“H-Haha...” Chuck chuckled nervously before everyone heard someone pound on the door as if they were about to break it down.

Chuck hurriedly backed away, and hid behind Nessia, thinking that the “almighty” Dorm Manager of the First Years could save him.

The young lady with long brown hair, and brown eyes, gave Chuck the “you owe me one” glare before walking towards the door that was constantly being pounded by knocks.

“Okay calm down, I’m opening it now,” Nessia said and opened the door.

Behind it was none other than Princess Xenia, who entered the room without even asking for permission.

She then glared at Chuck’s direction, making the latter flinch.

“Why did you close the door?” Princess Xenia asked civilly, but depending on Chuck’s answer, she might start throwing hands.

“I-I was hiding the evidence of Alex’s private time,” Chuck replied. “This is a guy’s room, you know? There are some things that aren’t meant for young ladies to see!”

The corner of Alex’s lips twitched because his roommate didn’t hesitate to lie, and pushed him to the frontlines of war without any hesitation.

‘When I face a powerful enemy in the future, I’ll make sure to introduce myself as Chuck,’ Alex thought. ‘This guy really doesn’t know the meaning of loyalty!’

Princess Xenia frowned before glancing at Alex’s direction as if confirming if what Chuck was saying was the truth.

“He closed the door because he was guilty of cheating on you,” Alex replied without hesitation.

Since it had come to this, let the world burn!

“I did not do such a thing!” Chuck shouted. “Don’t make things up!”

“Have you looked at yourself in the mirror before?” Alex sneered. “Don’t bring other people in your lover’s quarrel.”

““We’re not lovers!””

Chuck and Princess Xenia said at the same time, which made Alex smirk.

“Anyway, let’s put that matter on hold for now,” Nessia interjected so that things wouldn’t spiral out of control. “Your Highness, why are you here?”

Princess Xenia glared at Chuck one last time before shifting her attention to the Dorm Head of the First Years.

“I heard that Alex is already awake, so I decided to give him a visit,” Princess Xenia answered. “I want to talk to him in private.”

“In private?” Alex frowned. “Is it that important that you can’t say it here?”

Princess Xenia pondered for a while as she glanced at the people inside the room.

After careful consideration, she decided that it wouldn’t really matter too much if they heard her conversation with the President of Endless Horizon.

“It’s about your club,” Princess Xenia stated. “After the battle royale, many believed that you guys used an underhanded method to win it.”

“Underhanded method?” Alex blinked. “What underhanded method?”

Princess Xenia sighed before saying what she had heard from the nobles, who watched, and participated in the yearly event of the First Years.

“When the Demon Worshipers appeared, everyone was incapacitated with the exception of your members,” Princess Xenia replied. “At least, that is what everyone likes to believe.”

“Princess, did you forget?” Alex smiled. “You were also not incapacitated. Also, it’s not only you. There are other students as well, right? And, they are not members of my club.”

The main reason why Alex had asked Nessia to add Princess Xenia, Fran, Lapis, and Evangeline to the list of people that wouldn’t be affected by her magical formation was so that he could create a perfect alibi.

An alibi that would allow him to say that aside from his club members, there were other people, who didn’t experience the pressure of gravity during the tournament.

Alex also made sure to add Fran’s twin brother, Finn, to the list of exceptions at the last minute.

That way, nobody would be able to say that his club was the only people who weren’t affected by the magical formation of the Demon Worshipers.

“I’m sure people saw that as well.” Princess Xenia nodded. “However, they will believe what they want to believe, and this is why people are trying to join your club to get into the bottom of this. So, be very careful when accepting new members.”

Alex crossed his arms over his chest. “So, you’re saying to only invite people that we can trust in the club, right?”

“Exactly.” Princess Xenia nodded.

“Then, can you be trusted, Princess?” Alex inquired.

“You can trust me,” Princess Xenia answered without hesitation.

“Then, do you want to join Endless Horizon?”

“Yes.”

“Good. You’re now a member of our club.”

Chuck looked at Alex in disbelief because Princess Xenia joining their club was like inviting a wolf inside a chicken coop.

If she was there, wouldn’t that mean that he had to behave himself?!

Alex laughed internally after seeing Chuck’s pale face, which was a payoff for his betrayal earlier.

“Alex, let me ask you a serious question,” Princess Xenia said. “Did you know that the Demon Worshipers are going to attack the First Years?”

“Who knows?” Alex replied with a mischievous smile on his face. “Just remember this, Princess. If you are going to join our club, you must know how to keep secrets.”

All the members of Endless Horizon stared at the Princess, as if supporting Alex’s statement.

“I understand,” Princess Xenia stated. “You can forget my question.”

“Good.” Alex then took out a club registration form and handed it to Princess Xenia. “Just sign, so that you can be an official member of our club. Oh, by the way, we are not receiving funds from the academy, so we have to make do with what we have.”

“I know,” Princess Xenia scanned the registration form to make sure that it wasn’t tampered in any way. “I’ll make sure to donate to the club, so that we will have funds to use.”

“Finally, we have a golden goose in our club.” Alex patted his chest in relief.

“A what?” Princess Xenia asked.

"I mean, please check the registration form if the terms are agreeable to you." Alex coughed lightly.

Princess Xenia eyed the young man for a few seconds before shifting her attention back to the registration form in her hands.

She was a member of the royalty, so when it came to signing contracts, or agreements, she had to double check that there weren't any clauses that might lead to trouble in the future.

Finding nothing suspicious in the form, Princess Xenia sat down on the desk, and started to fill up the form with her signature.

"One more thing, my brother is also paying close attention to your club right now," Princess Xenia warned. "If not for the fact that he's the Vice President of the Lionheart Club, he might have also joined Endless Horizon."

"Your brother is one of the fifteen survivors in the battle royale, right?" Alex inquired.

"Yes," Princess Xenia answered. "The third prince of Avalon, and my brother, Edward Von Morwyn."

Truth be told, Alex was very wary of the third prince of Avalon.

He was one of the three original heroes of ELO alongside Renard, and Cassian, who was Astrea's brother.

Although he was a Hero in the story, he was more prone to becoming part of the evil faction because his character was more suited to become an anti hero.

The same could be said to one of the three Main Heroines alongside Nessia, and Aeris, who was none other than Evangeline.

Alex was very familiar with Evangeline because...

She was also one of the characters he liked in ELO.

While she may not be one of his four queens, she was one of the main heroines of the story, and her arc was one of the most memorable ones in the game.

If possible, Alex didn't want Evangeline to become his enemy.

He would rather have to face Prince Edward in the third arc than fight the Vampire Princess, who was doing her best to live a normal life in Frieden Academy.

Chapter 238: I Will Always Be Your Friend

"You know, I've been meaning to ask," Princess Xenia said after handing the registration back to Alex. "That thing on your neck, is that a hickey?"

Alex had completely forgotten about the kiss mark on his neck because of the commotion that happened earlier.

"It's just a bruise I got after scratching my neck," Alex answered.

He still had no clue if it was a hickey or not. So he really couldn't affirm, or deny anything.

"It's a hickey." Vaan smiled. "I gave it to him when he was sleeping."

"Oi, don't create any misunderstandings!" Alex complained.

"Dim Dim!" Dim Dim also told Vaan to not lie, making the cute lady—errr boy giggle.

Princess Xenia no longer wanted to pursue the topic and bid her goodbye. However, before leaving the room, she once again warned Alex that it wasn't only her brother that was paying close attention to him, and his club, Endless Horizon.

“The Crest Clubs are also now watching you guys,” Princess Xenia warned. “It is best if you guys keep a low profile for now.”

After giving that last reminder, the princess finally left the room, leaving Alex, and the members of his club behind.

“She’s right, you know?” Nessia sighed. “I have been approached by other clubs, who were trying to poach me. Three of them were from Crest Clubs as well. I’m sure that the others might have similar experiences. That last one that tried to entice me was the Inner Sanctum.”

“I have also been approached by the Inner Sanctum,” Chuck commented. “If they invited me a month ago, I might have joined them without thinking twice. But now, I have no reason to join them.”

The Inner Sanctum was an exclusive club for the Mages, or any other magic profession in the academy.

They were very picky with their members, and they would only invite the most talented magicians in the academy.

“I can understand Nessia being invited, but why did they invite you, Chuck?” Alex asked.

“Why?” Chuck flipped his hair. “It’s because I’m a genius, of course.”

“... Sure.” Alex wanted to say that he was a genius troublemaker, but held it back instead.

“So, did they entice you with benefits?” Alex asked as he sat on top of his bed. “Did they give you offers that you can’t possibly refuse?”

“”They did.””

Nessia, and Chuck admitted.

Instead of being anxious, Alex just found this information quite amusing.

During his playthrough, Nessia had indeed become one of the members of the Inner Sanctum.

However, this only happened when she became a Second Year in the academy.

As for Chuck, he only appeared as a side character, whose only purpose was to create mayhem wherever he went.

"You don't look too worried that we might get poached by other clubs," Nessia said.

"Why should I be worried?" Alex shrugged. "I'm sure that our Club will give you more freedom than the other clubs in the academy. Lastly, you will no longer have to worry about meeting their expectations."

Charles, who had remained quiet until now, also shared the fact that he had been scouted by none other than the Obsidian Fang.

"Interesting..." Alex rubbed his chin. "So, what did they offer you?"

"The one thing I want the most," Charles replied. "The cure for my sister's disease."

Alex became silent because he knew that Eris only had a few years to live.

In order to cure her disease, Chuck must get his hands on the pill called Aurelia's Tear, which could be exchanged in the academy for a hundred thousand academy points.

"What answer did you give them?" Alex asked after a few minutes of silence.

"I said that I'll need time to think about it," Charles answered.

Clearly, this was a very difficult decision for him because he had to choose between being loyal to his friends, or ending the suffering of her sister.

“Charles, do what you must,” Alex said, while patting the teenage boy’s shoulder. “It’s not like we are suddenly going to become enemies or something even if you joined Obsidian Fang. Also, I will always be your friend. Remember that.”

Every Crest Club gained funding in the academy, and this included a monthly allowance of academy points.

So a hundred thousand academy points was something that they could give without too much effort.

After all, these clubs had existed for many years, and they had saved up enough points after many generations.

Compared to them, the Endless Horizon Club was just a newborn chick without any foundations.

Charles looked at Alex with a complicated gaze. Clearly, this was a very hard decision for him to make.

The young man had helped him clear the Dungeon of Beginnings, and also helped him clear the second trial of the academy.

It was not an exaggeration to say that what Alex did was a debt that was hard to repay in his lifetime.

Without him, he might have died inside the Dungeon of Beginnings, and would never have the chance to reunite with his sisters ever again.

Alex also knew that the teenage boy was having a hard time, so he told him the words he said earlier.

While he wanted Charles to remain in his club, he also knew that his main goal in the academy was to cure his sister’s disease.

Nessia looked at Charles sadly because the latter had also told her about his sister Eris.

In fact, she had visited the orphanage with him, and met the adorable girl who had just turned five years old.

“Alex is right, Charles,” Nessia commented. “The Obsidian Fang is a good club, so you being there is also a good thing. Besides... you can help us spy on them if you become a part of their club.”

“Brilliant!” Alex smirked. “You’re really a genius, Nessia.”

“Ahem!” Dim Dim raised its body proudly, as if it was the one that raised Nessia as a baby.

Charles blinked once then twice after hearing the young lady’s words.

“Become a spy?” Charles asked.

“Yes!” Nessia answered. “I’m not telling you to betray them or anything. Just tell us things that you can tell us without feeling guilty.”

“Indeed.” Alex nodded. “This is what you call having friends in high places.”

The two tag-teamed to tell Charles that actually joining Obsidian Fang was beneficial to their club.

In the end, Charles said that he would think about it, and excused himself to leave the room, so that he could have some time to think.

When the teenage boy finally left, Nessia, and Alex’s shoulder sagged, and the two sighed at the same time.

Both of them didn’t want Charles to leave, but they also didn’t want to tie him down because they knew that he wished to save his sister as soon as possible.

In the end, they simply thought of ways on how to make joining Obsidian Fang more beneficial to their own club, so that the teenage boy wouldn't feel too guilty if he left.

"You must really treat him as a friend," Vaan commented.

"That's because he is one," Alex answered, and Nessia nodded to agree to his statement.

Chuck also sighed because he got along well with Charles. He was very down to earth, calm, and was a very dependable teammate.

Also, Chuck couldn't hold a conversation with Renard, so having Charles around was a life saver.

"I just hope that whatever decision he makes, he will not regret it," Nessia said. "I'll return to my room. For now, we should keep a low profile because we are sticking like sore thumbs here in the academy."

Alex agreed to Nessia's statement, and promised that he would not do anything for the time being.

Vaan also left, but before he did, he thanked Alex again for saving him, and promised to return the favor in the future.

"Finally, it's quieter," Chuck said before lying on his bed.

Although he looked calm on the surface, the teenage boy was actually feeling a little worried about their club, especially after his brother went to look for him earlier.

"We will crush your club. Look forward to it."

Chuck's brother, Caspian, said that threat with a smirk plastered on his face.

It was very obvious that he wasn't just making things up because he looked very confident when he said those words.

After thinking about it for a while, he decided to share this information to Alex, so that their president could think of a countermeasure, just in case his brother's threat really came true.

However, to his surprise, Alex seemed very eager for this news rather than being anxious about it.

Chapter 239: The Weakness Of Nobility

"Alex, didn't you hear what I just said?" Chuck had expected a different kind of reaction from his roommate.

Even if Alex didn't show fear, Chuck at least thought that the other party would be worried. What kind of reaction was this? Was that really excitement on his roommate's face? Chuck even doubted if he worded things wrongly or if he and Alex had mismatched vocabularies.

"I heard you," Alex replied. "So, basically, the Lionheart Society is going to target our club and our members, right?"

"Yeah, that's what I said." Chuck blinked. "Aren't you worried or scared about them eyeing us?"

"Why should I be worried?" Alex inquired.

"I mean, the current president is Chester Blackvale, the son of the Duke of Blackvale. Their vice president is Xenia's brother, Prince Edward. Both of them are not to be underestimated."

"Chuck, you think too much," Alex comforted. "The most they can do is bully our members."

"Isn't that bad?" Chuck insisted.

"Bullying is always a bad thing," Alex agreed. "We'll just have to make sure to collect evidence when we get bullied. If we do it well, won't we get material just perfect for blackmail?"

Alex's devilish smirk clued Chuck in on his intentions.

"You plan to blackmail them?" Chuck asked in disbelief.

"Why not?" Alex answered. "Chuck, what is the thing nobles hate the most?"

"Paying taxes to the kingdom?"

"Um, yes. Reasonable. They do hate that a lot. But think of something else they hate. Think of their weakness."

Chuck crossed his arms over his chest and pondered a different answer. However, no matter how much he tried to think, he couldn't come up with anything that nobles hated more than financially contributing to the greater good.

"I give up," Chuck said. "What is it?"

Alex's grin widened. "The weakness of Nobles is that they care a lot about their reputation. So what if their reputation suddenly takes a hit? Reputation is so important to nobles. The higher their rank, the more it matters. In the royal family, for example, a good and bad reputation makes the difference as to whether they have the chance to succeed the king.

"In history, whenever a scum became King, didn't the people always revolt? No matter the rank or power, no one would like to deal with that. That's why the princes do their best to appear courageous and righteous. Although the Lionheart Society is rotten to the core, and the commoners in the academy are not able to stand against them, that doesn't mean we can't do anything."

Alex then reminded Chuck who the current president of the student council was.

"Theo Asborne is the Third Prince of the Solara Kingdom," Alex said. "But even he who holds so much power needs to follow the rules of the academy. Of course, he can twist and bend the rules every now and then, but he will always make sure not to go past the bottom line of the academy.

"I'm sure you still don't understand this, so leave everything to me. I'll make sure to milk them dry and make them regret targeting our club."

Actually, the bullying part was on par with the story of ELO.

Renard and Nessia, who were both Commoners, would get bullied by the Lionheart Society, which would allow them to mature as the protagonists.

Alex planned to take a different approach and not actively shield the main heroes from the original story line.

If he always stopped things before they happened, there wouldn't be any character progression for Renard and Nessia.

This might even cause them to miss out on the fruitful encounters that would help them grow into the saviors of ELO.

Of course, if their club was targeted, Alex would deal with it.

But for personal matters, he would just observe from afar and let the two heroes handle what difficulties came their way.

They were not greenhouse flowers who needed Alex's constant protection and care.

In fact, Alex wanted them to become strong as soon as possible. That way, he could hug their thighs in the future!

"Well, if you say so." Chuck nodded. "Do you have any advice for me so I won't get bullied?"

"Stick to Princess Xenia like a simp," Alex answered in a heartbeat. "Make sure that anyone who sees you is convinced that you have fallen head over heels in love with her."

“Tsk!” Chuck clicked his tongue because he had already half expected this answer from Alex.

He was certain that his older brother, Caspian, would target him personally and make his school life miserable.

This was why he sought serious advice from Alex.

But his president told him to stick to his fiancée like a simp?

‘Over my dead sexy body,’ Chuck thought.

Alex looked at his roommate’s expression of defiance. He was starting to understand why Chuck was a troublemaker.

‘It might also be because Caspian bullies him behind the scenes,’ Alex realized. ‘He might’ve decided to take the initiative and cause trouble for others before others can do the same to him. If that’s his hidden backstory in the game, Chuck is a smart guy.’

In short, people couldn’t cause trouble for Chuck if he troubled them first!

‘As for Lavinia and Charles...’ Alex mulled over his other club members.

Lavinia, Nessia, and Renard were in Class B, so they could look out for each other.

Charles was in Class C, with Alex and Chuck.

Lavinia wasn’t someone who would allow herself to get bullied. Besides, her grandfather and the Headmaster were close. Although the student body didn’t know this, her connections would be useful if things got out of hand.

As for Charles... Alex had to admit that he was a little worried about him.

Right now, the teenage boy was going through a lot.

He had to gather enough academy points to buy the cure for his little sister, Eris, while deciding whether he should stay with Endless Horizon or join the Obsidian Fang.

While Charles didn't have a weak personality, it wouldn't change the fact that he had the mindset of a commoner, which the members of the Lionheart Society could easily take advantage of.

'The only safe people in our club are Latifa and Princess Xenia,' Alex thought. 'Latifa is now staying at the clocktower, so she's safe. As for the princess, no one will dare to harm her.'

As for himself? Alex wasn't too worried.

In fact, he was looking forward to their acts of bullying.

Professor Gareth owed him a favor. If the bullies really went overboard, he could always use his pocket watch to show the professor what was done to him.

With this, the one who would be on the losing end would be none other than the Lionheart Society.

Sure, they might be noble students, but they were still students.

If a Professor took them to the disciplinary committee, they would definitely regret their actions.

Last but not least, Alex and Dim Dim held grudges.

With the two of them working together, the members of Lionheart Society would be coughing out mouthfuls of blood in no time!

Chapter 240: Dim Dim Strikes Back!

It had been three days since Alex left the infirmary.

Just like what Nessia had told him, he had become some kind of celebrity.

Everywhere he went, people would stare at him as if he were a rare beast.

Girls would whisper to each other whenever he walked past them. Alex being Alex assumed that they were gushing about how handsome he was.

Dim Dim had also become popular.

Whenever the Dim Sum God wasn't with Alex, it often patrolled the academy grounds with Daisy—usually while classes were in session.

As it had the habit of sharing custard buns with everyone it met, like a politician distributing favors to earn votes for the next election, most people developed a favorable impression of it.

However, Dim Dim's real reason for doing this was to change the image of its close friend, Daisy, and make people realize that she wasn't a scary and aggressive monster.

Doom Cows were territorial, and Daisy had claimed the entirety of the academy as its territory.

This was also the reason why she always patrolled the campus, making sure that no monsters were causing trouble on her home turf.

Dim Dim understood this. It was now the Doom Cow's patrol buddy, keeping her company while she made her rounds.

And now, the two were doing their usual patrol when Dim Dim saw a familiar little girl. She was walking alongside several children her age, and all of them were carrying small baskets.

“Hey! It’s Dim Dim!” one of the children of the orphanage shouted and pointed at the little bun.

The small horde of children cried out in happiness and sprinted toward Dim Dim, who was currently perched on top of Daisy’s head.

The Sister escorting the children almost fainted when the kids suddenly ran off toward the scary-looking monster who could easily crush their bodies with a single stomp of its hoof.

However, the children didn’t seem to fear this creature. After all, Dim Dim was with it, so it couldn’t be dangerous, right?

As the children surrounded the Doom Cow, all of them started to pat, touch, and poke its body, as if wanting to understand it more.

Daisy lowered its head and looked at the hyper children, who were seeing a Doom Cow for the first time.

“E-Everyone, please calm down,” the Sister said as she tried her best to keep herself calm. She bravely approached the children, hoping to stop them from accidentally provoking the monster into attacking them. “Please, do not touch Mr. Cow.”

“Dim!” Dim Dim stated.

“I mean, do not touch Ms. Cow.”

“Dim.”

Dim Dim nodded because the Sister realized her mistake.

“Kyaaan!” Eris shouted in surprise because Daisy suddenly started licking her cheek.

"P-Please, Ms. Cow," the Sister said shakily as she walked closer to the Doom Cow. "Please don't eat her. Eris is a good girl. She's just a very curious one."

"Dim Dim." Dim Dim informed the Sister that everything was fine and she had nothing to worry about, saying Daisy might look scary, but she in fact was a gentle soul.

Daisy would never attack weak and innocent children. Besides, they didn't seem afraid of her either!

"Dim Dim?" Dim Dim asked the Sister why they were in the academy.

The Sister then explained that the orphanages in the capital usually visited the academy twice a month to receive donations as well as gifts from the Headmaster.

It just so happened that whenever they visited, classes would usually be in session, so most students didn't see them.

They also didn't want to disturb the students, so they always came at this time.

Understanding the situation, Dim Dim and Daisy followed the kids as they headed toward the northern part of the academy, where a grand tower was located.

This was the Headmaster's Tower, and only those who had his permission could enter.

When they arrived at their destination, a young lady with long black hair and a fox mask was already there waiting for them.

"Please come in," Himea said. "The Headmaster is away, but he has already informed me of your visit. Please follow me."

The excited children entered the tower while Dim Dim and Daisy stayed behind.

They had only tagged along to ensure that none of the children would wander off on their own and get lost on the vast campus.

Himea gave the little bun and the Doom Cow one last glance before closing the door of the tower.

“Dim Dim.”

“Moooo.”

Since the children were now safe, the two resumed their patrol.

When they neared the library, Daisy stopped walking.

Her ears were twitching as if she was hearing something that no ordinary humans could.

Dim Dim also looked alert and was surveying its surroundings.

Clearly, the two of them sensed that something was out of place.

They raised their guard, but that didn’t stop two students that seemed like Fourth Years from suddenly appearing and throwing two Magical Nets at Dim Dim.

Their plan was to capture the little bun, as ordered by one of the nobles that they were serving.

Daisy snorted and unleashed a pillar of flames from her nose, incinerating the Magical Nets completely.

Dim Dim, who was obviously their target, jumped off Daisy’s head.

It then used a skill—Air Strider—that it had bought from the Arcana Shop and moved through the air as if it was ricocheting on invisible trampolines that increased its speed with each bounce.

When Alex had cleared the hidden quest during the Battle Royale, he had been awarded a total of 15,000 Arcana Points.

The original reward had been 10,000 Arcana Points for saving Vaan, but he had received an additional reward of 5,000 Arcana Points for exorcising Willow's corrupted soul.

With these points, Alex had finally been able to buy the skill, Multitask, which made him more confident in his abilities.

Since Dim Dim would always have the same number of Arcana Points as Alex, the little bun had splurged a bit and brought the Air Strider Skill, inspired by the time it had used Alex's shields as stepping stones in the air.

This had cost Dim Dim a whopping 20,000 Arcana Points, but it was very happy with its purchase.

As it was now faster than a tennis ball that got hit by a full powered strike, Dim Dim caught up to its attackers almost instantly.

It then summoned a stink bomb and threw it at one of the boys that had attacked it.

The bomb exploded, coating the boy with skunk essence, making the latter scream in dismay and anger.

However, Dim Dim wasn't finished yet.

It threw another stink bomb at the second Fourth Year, ensuring that no one would be able to stomach coming close to him for the next day or two.

The two Fourth Years stopped running and decided to punish the little bun for its actions.

However, when they saw the charging Doom Cow who seemed to be out for their blood, they felt all their resolve and anger drain away. Instead, they used a scroll to teleport themselves a hundred meters away.

Dim Dim summersaulted in the air and landed perfectly on top of Daisy's head just as she finally stopped running.

"Mooo?"

"Dim Dim."

The Doom Cow was worried, but Dim Dim reassured her that it was fine.

Alex had already told the little bun to be careful because there was a chance that it would get attacked whenever it wasn't with him.

Unfortunately for its attackers, Dim Dim had been prepared and even enjoyed the attack, treating it like a game.

The little bun also made sure to remember the faces of the two teenagers who were cursing it to the high heavens as both of them now stank with skunk essence.

They were regretting the fact that they hadn't gathered information about their target, who was not as easy to capture as their employer claimed.