

Endless 241

Chapter 241: The Art Of Blackmail [Part 1]

“Dim Dim!”

“I see, so they finally made their move, huh?”

“Dim!”

The corner of Alex’s lips curled upward. The ones who ordered to have Dim Dim captured must have thought that the little bun was easy pick.

What a big mistake. Dim Dim was certainly cute and harmless, but the projectiles in its arsenal were devious.

It had spent a lot of its Academy Points buying alchemy bombs, stink bombs, smoke bombs, flash bombs, and many other throwable weapons from the Exchange Center of the academy.

“Do you remember what they looked like?” Alex inquired.

“Dim!” Dim Dim nodded.

Alex and Dim Dim both smiled evilly as their eyes gleamed with mischief. They had expected to be bullied, but they hadn’t expected that the Lionheart Society would resort to kidnapping!

The two then headed to the Staff Room to look for Professor Gareth.

After Alex saved Lucius from the Chrono Maze, the professor promised that the young man could ask him for a favor any time. And now, it was time to cash that in.

When they arrived, Professor Gareth was fortunately present. Alex and Dim Dim went straight to the point and explained their situation.

"I see..." Professor Gareth frowned. "But unless you have evidence, this might devolve into a you-say-they-say situation. In that case, it will be difficult to punish the attackers."

Alex smiled and took out his pocket watch.

This made Professor Gareth chuckle. He nearly forgot about the pocketwatch that allowed Alex to view any scenes that had happened in the past.

With the pocket watch, the Professor accompanied the two to the location where Dim Dim had been attacked.

However, before they even arrived, Dim Dim spotted the two Fourth Years who had attacked it. This time, they were accompanied by three more people!

One of them happened to be Chuck's brother, Caspian, who immediately furrowed his brow when he realized that Alex was with Professor Gareth.

"Dim Dim!" Dim Dim pointed out the two culprits to Alex and Professor Gareth.

Alex, who now understood the situation, whispered something in the Professor's ear. The older man nodded before turning his attention to the other students.

"You five, come over here," Professor Gareth ordered, leaving no room for discussion.

Caspian gave his club members the "let me handle this" gaze. They quickly—too quickly, perhaps—agreed to let him take charge and deal with the situation.

"What can we do for you, Professor?" Caspian asked politely.

“We have received a report that those two individuals that are part of your group attempted a kidnapping,” Professor Gareth said. “This is a serious offense, which can result in them being kicked out of the academy.”

Professor Gareth recognized the two since they had been his students in the past.

Hearing the Professor’s reply, the complexion of the two Fourth Years paled. If they were expelled just before graduation, they would definitely become the shame of their families for generations!

They had not acted voluntarily. If it weren’t for Caspian’s order, they wouldn’t have attempted to kidnap Dim Dim.

Since they were merely children of Baron Families—and hence lower in rank—they had thought they could build connections with Caspian, the son of a Ducal Family, by following his command.

However, Caspian remained calm and even thought of a way to get them out of trouble.

“Professor, that is a serious accusation,” Caspian stated. “Even if you are a Professor of the Academy, you cannot punish students without evidence.”

“That’s right,” Professor Gareth agreed. “And that is why we are going to the scene of the crime. However, if we find evidence, I will also punish you, Mr. Rizz, for being their accomplice.”

“Accomplice?” Caspian frowned. After all, he had been the one responsible for ordering the two Fourth Years to kidnap Dim Dim. “Isn’t that going a bit too far, Professor?”

“Follow me, Mr. Rizz,” Professor Gareth instruction. “The rest of you, follow me as well.”

Who was Professor Gareth?

He was one of the Guardians of the Academy, meaning he had a higher position than most Professors.

The Headmaster also trusted him completely. This was one of the reasons the Demon Worshipers had targeted his son, Lucius—with the professor as his father, he would've been a powerful pawn in the board, capable of pulling off underhanded things in the academy.

Unfortunately for them, Alex had foiled their plans and inadvertently discovered the plan to attack the students during the Battle Royale.

Left with no choice, Caspian and his cronies trailed behind Alex and the Professor as they headed to the scene of the crime.

A few minutes later...

"Dim Dim!" Dim Dim pointed at the spot where it had been attacked.

"I will now use an artifact that will show what happened in the past," Professor Gareth said. "I borrowed this from the Headmaster just to solve this case."

"If the two of you are really innocent, you will not receive any punishment from the academy. I will even award you academy points to make up for wrongfully accusing you. But if you are indeed guilty..."

The Professor didn't bother finishing his sentence. He simply smiled at the two Fourth Years who looked like they were about to cry.

Since the pocket watch was a precious treasure, Alex had asked the Professor to pretend that the power that he was about to demonstrate came from the Headmaster.

Meanwhile, Alex activated the pocket watch without taking it out of his pocket so no one else would notice.

Soon, the scene of what had happened earlier materialized in front of everyone.

It showed how Daisy and Dim Dim were patrolling this part of the academy when the two Fourth Years appeared and tried to capture the little bun.

Caspian's eyes widened so much they almost fell out of his sockets. Never in his wildest dream would he expect that the Headmaster had such an ability!

Confronted with irrefutable proof, the two Fourth Years immediately apologized and begged Professor Gareth not to expel them.

Caspian's face also lost some colour. If the two were interrogated and ended up confessing everything, he would be punished as well.

But just as Professor was about to announce his verdict, Alex coughed lightly to catch his attention.

"Professor, can you let me handle this?" Alex asked. "After all, they tried to attack my precious friend, Dim Dim."

"Dim Dim!" Dim Dim took out a handkerchief out of thin air and started to wipe its eyes like a melodramatic opera actress.

It wanted everyone to know how hurt, how indignant, how wronged it felt for being attacked out of nowhere!

"I will allow it." Professor Gareth let the younger man take charge since he still owed him a debt of gratitude.

However, he was also curious what kind of punishment Alex would give to the offenders.

"Don't worry, I will not ask for much," Alex said with a kind smile, but Caspian wasn't fooled.

"Since those responsible for the attack on Dim Dim belong to the Lionheart Society, how about the club compensate us with 50,000 Academy Points?" Alex suggested. "10,000 Academy Points for each culprit."

I'm a very forgetful person, you see, and Dim Dim's memory isn't very good either. 50,000 Academy Points might just be enough for us to forget this ever happened."

Caspian almost coughed out blood because even he didn't have 50,000 Academy Points.

Even if the Club had amassed over a million points over the years, and 50,000 Academy Points was not a big deal to them, why would they pay for the actions of members who had acted independently?

Unfortunately, one of the guys in Caspian's entourage was actually an officer of the Lionheart Society. He had accompanied Caspian to intimidate Alex just in case the latter was planning to file a complaint to the Staff of the academy.

They had acted quickly as soon as they heard the news, but Alex was one step faster than them.

The Lionheart Society Officer made a face, realizing that they were now in a bind.

As much as possible, he needed to do damage control before things spiraled out of their control.

Chapter 242: The Art Of Blackmail [Part 2]

Alex's proposal was, well, ridiculous. There was no other way to put it. The disbelief on Caspian's face soon gave way to anger and frustration.

"No!" Caspian immediately vetoed the idea as his face reddened with rage. "We can't give you that much. Also, these two guys are not part of our club. Why should we be responsible for what they have decided to do in their own time?"

"Sir Rizz, you can't do this to us!" one of the Fourth Years exclaimed.

"We only followed your orders!" the second Fourth Year added in horror. "Otherwise, we wouldn't have done such a thing!"

"Shut up!" Caspian shouted back. "We only met today, so don't act like we are friends or something!"

Caspian glared at the Fourth Years to let them know they should allow themselves to be punished if they didn't want the entirety of the Lionheart Society to become their enemy!

"Oh dear? Are you trying to say that you're not part of this incident?" Alex asked, looking a little troubled.

"That's right," Caspian huffed. "We played no part in this. If you want to punish anyone, punish those who are responsible. Punish those two!"

The Officer of the Lionheart Society nodded in satisfaction, seeing Caspian handle things the way he should.

With this, the two Fourth Years would become the scapegoats, leaving the image of their club intact.

"Did you hear that, Professor?" Alex asked. "I guess we have little choice but to take this to the Headmaster. We can ask him to visit the Lionheart Society and investigate. If the Headmaster uses his power to dig around, I'm sure many interesting things can be found."

To Caspian's shock, Professor Gareth actually appeared agreeable to this suggestion!

"By the way," Alex continued loudly, "once the Headmaster gets involved, the Lionheart Society might lose its position as a Crest Club, you know? I'm sure the alumni of the Lionheart Society will be veeeeeeeeeeeeery happy once they hear that you guys... f*cked up."

The Lionheart Society members now looked like ants on a hot pan. But Alex wasn't done yet.

"Ah, that's right! Isn't Prince Edward the current Vice President of the Club?" Alex's smile was positively diabolical even as his tone remained innocent. "I'm sure he will be more than open to a conversation with us. Professor Gareth, please accompany me to the Lionheart Society's club room. I'd like to talk to the higher-ups about this."

“Just a little fun fact about myself—I have this crippling habit of escalating things. It’s so exciting, just thinking about blowing this incident up till everyone in the capital knows about this! Even the grandpas and the grandmas in the streets will be talking about it.”

“Kukuku!” Dim Dim chuckled evilly.

The Dim Sum God was a very innocent soul, but Alex was teaching it firsthand the Art of Blackmail.

“Your name is Alex, right?” the Officer, who was a Third Year student, finally said something. “Very well. We will compensate you with 50,000 Academy Points. I just hope that you will, as you have promised, forget about this matter completely.”

“Hmmm? Were we talking about something?” Alex tilted his head. “I honestly forgot why I’m even here.”

While Professor Gareth could see through Alex’s acting, he didn’t interfere. He didn’t mind how Alex did things as long as the case could be satisfactorily resolved.

He could also tell that this was the Crest Club’s way of trying to intimidate Alex and, by extension, Endless Horizon, since they had been gaining more popularity among students.

The Professor was already used to such scenes. He had seen similar situations many times in the past. But this was the first time he saw a club with enough backbone to not back down when facing a Crest Club.

Usually, most clubs would be intimidated to even raise their heads. In fact, they would go out of their way to avoid offending any of the Crest Clubs.

‘Alex is built differently,’ Professor Gareth mused as he listened to the conversation between the students.

“I will send the compensation directly to your account within an hour,” the Officer said. “But if news of this leaks out—”

“Then it will be your side which has done the leaking,” Alex interrupted. “I’m a man of my word, you know? My lips are sealed. Isn’t that right, Dim Dim?”

The Dim Sum God didn’t reply. It simply made an act of zipping its lips to tell everyone that it could be trusted to keep a secret.

“Okay, the two of you, come here.” Alex beckoned to the two Fourth Years, who had thought that they were already off the hook. “You guys and I have many things to talk about.”

The two Fourth Years understood that Alex held the power to decide whether they would graduate from the academy or not.

Alex didn’t forget to thank Professor Gareth for his help in resolving the issue before taking the two Fourth Years to the clock tower.

They only entered the ground floor and didn’t go up to the main club room.

“Don’t worry, I have a proposal for the two of you,” Alex said with a smile. “Of course, I will pay both of you properly. How about I give you ten thousand academy points each?”

Upon hearing the young man’s words, the expression of the two Fourth Years turned serious. They really needed academy points right now, but Alex’s offer sounded like it came with caveats.

“We will do what you want as long as it will not endanger our graduation from the academy,” the Fourth Year, who went by the name, Mark, replied.

He was slightly chubby, proving that he was well off when it came to many things.

“As long as what you ask of us doesn’t go past my bottom line, I will agree to it,” his friend, Spencer, stated.

Unlike Mark, Spencer was quite muscular and seemed to be a warrior of some sort.

Both of them were Rank 4, which was a good Rank for their age.

They were not exceptional, but they weren't lacking either.

Both of them were just average.

But that was something that Alex needed right now.

"Of course," Alex said, pretending to be scandalized by their implication. "Seniors, I won't do anything that might get you expelled. I'm not like Caspian, who will happily throw you away like rags and use you as scapegoats."

The two Fourth Years couldn't help but feel angry after being reminded of what had transpired earlier.

If they had known that Caspian was such a slimy bastard, they wouldn't have agreed to follow his orders, which had almost gotten them punished by Professor Gareth.

"Now, listen closely." Alex smirked. "What I want the two of you to do for me is..."

The more Mark and Spencer listened to Alex's proposal, the more the two thought that their junior was out of his mind.

But in the end, they agreed to his request. No matter how absurd it was, at the least they would no longer be expelled. Most importantly, it wouldn't affect their graduation and compensation was promised for their efforts.

"I look forward to working with the two of you, Mark and Spencer." Alex shook their hands, as if telling them that they were on the same side.

Truth be told, the young man recognized the two Fourth Years, who were considered “recruitable side characters” in the game.

In the game, the player could recruit any student in the academy to aid them with their quest.

Among the many options, two side characters were mentioned in the ELO Forums as seriously underrated characters.

While they might not be geniuses, the two of them were linked to a certain side quest where a Legendary Location could be unlocked before they graduated.

Getting their help now would allow Alex to visit that place with his Club Members so that at least one of them could gain a Legendary Weapon, Artifact, or Skill, that was only accessible in that particular location.

Chapter 243: Let Sleeping Dragons Lie [Part 1]

A week had passed since Mark and Spencer attempted to kidnap Dim Dim.

Ever since then, no one from the Lionheart Society had tried to mess with Alex or Dim Dim.

However, the same couldn’t be said for the other members of Endless Horizon.

Lavinia, Charles, Renard, Nessia, and Chuck found themselves being subjected to all forms of bullying—from name-calling to backhanded compliments to malicious gossip.

Renard and Lavinia were not the sort to take things lying down, so they retaliated against their bullies. Unfortunately, it also landed them before the Disciplinary Committee.

For the offense of thrashing the people who had tried to mock them, both were suspended for two days.

The employers of the bullies knew that they would not stand down, so it made things easier for them to make the two resort to violence.

Either way, they only needed to get the two punished, and continue this strategy until they broke.

On the other hand, Nessia decided that it was more prudent to endure the constant harassment and insults hurled her way just because she was a Commoner.

Charles did the same thing as Nessia, but for some reason, the bullies targeting him stopped after a couple of days.

This might be because they were all sent to the infirmary after being bitten by countless ants when they least expected it.

The lucky ones had been bitten in their sleep. The not-so-lucky ones? The ants had struck when they were stuck to toilet bowls, utterly defenseless.

Some of these ants carried mild toxins. Although their toxins were not fatal to humans, they could still cause pain far worse than normal bug bites.

As for Chuck? Well, his troublemaker phase had started.

Those who tried to mess with him got messed with first. Of course, that landed him in hot water as well.

However, he was more resourceful—and more shameless—compared to everyone else from Endless Horizon. By skillfully and subtly mentioning Princess Xenia, he managed to escape serious punishment on several occasions.

As for Vaan, well, no one tried to bully the pretty lady—err, boy since they saw him as a tragic victim of the Demon Worshiper, Willow.

Besides, almost everyone thought of him as a pitiful girl who needed protection.

He gained a lot of fans, and even those who did not fall for his good looks knew that they would instantly become the most hated person in school if they were to pick on this delicate beauty who had been through so much already!

This was good news for Vaan but bad news for Alex.

After all, the silver-haired young man was now the target of several young men who wished they could snap his neck.

Frankly, it could be blamed on Vann—the pretty boy somehow developed a habit of hugging Alex’s arm or back whenever they were together. This filled the sims with jealousy and made Alex public enemy number one!

“Vaan, can you tone it down a bit?” Alex asked. “I’m almost sure you’re doing this on purpose.”

“Am I?” Vaan giggled. “But Alex, are you sure you’re not going to do anything? Our members are all anxious and exhausted these past few days.”

“Don’t worry. If they ask me for help, I will definitely lend a hand,” Alex answered. “But since none of them are asking for my help, it means that they plan to handle things on their own.”

“Maybe they’re just shy?” Vaan suggested, linking arms with Alex.

As they walked side by side down the corridor, the ladies they passed by looked at them with sparkling eyes and quickly turned to whisper to their friends in excited voices.

Alex was like the prince who had saved the princess from the evil witch, and teenage girls often liked these kinds of stories.

Despite being on the receiving end of many death glares from his male schoolmates, Alex didn’t show any discomfort at Vaan’s clinginess. After all, Vaan was still pretending to be a girl.

It was for the pretty boy's safety. Even Willow had kept this secret when possessing his body and brought it to the afterlife with her.

Even the son of the Viscount of Montclair was aware that Vaan was a boy, yet he kept his mouth shut.

Of course, it wasn't out of generosity or any positive feeling. He was simply compelled to keep this secret since it was his only blackmail material against the last heir of the Damne family.

"Well," Alex said as he glanced at the pretty boy, who was clearly having fun making others believe they were a couple. "Who do you think will be the first to ask me for help?"

"Nessia," Vaan answered. "She looks like she's going to start killing people very soon."

Alex chuckled, knowing Nessia would not do something like that.

Why?

Because she planned to make her bullies suffer a very slow and painful school life.

In order for that to happen, she would need them to be very much alive, right?

"Boooo! Why are you laughing at the suffering of others?" Vaan pouted. "Do you really want our club to be looked down on by the other clubs?"

"Of course not." Alex shook his head. "Remember this, Vaan, our members are not that weak."

"Even Latifa?"

"Latifa is actually strong, you know? You just can't see how strong she is because she's always sleeping. However, have you heard of that famous saying?"

“What famous saying?”

Alex smirked. “Let sleeping dragons lie.”

Vaan blinked. “...Are you calling Latifa a dragon? Isn’t she a Foxkin?”

“She might be a Foxkin, but her temperament is like a dragon,” Alex clarified. “A sleeping dragon doesn’t roar. But that doesn’t mean it can’t burn everything to ash when it wakes up.”

Vaan grinned. “I’ll remember that. Though it’s hard to imagine Latifa doing anything other than napping all day.”

“You’ll be surprised. She’s the type who fights only when it really matters,” Alex explained as his attention was momentarily drawn to a group of students whispering and giggling behind their hands. “Just like the rest of us.”

Just then, a loud commotion echoed from around the corner.

“YOU BASTARDS THINK I’LL JUST TAKE THIS LYING DOWN?!”

Alex and Vaan stopped in their tracks and looked at each other.

“Renard!” they exclaimed in unison.

The two sprinted towards the ruckus, only to see a few teenage boys running away from Renard, whose shirt was half-torn and eyes were wild. With one hand he wielded... a classroom table?

A moment later, a loud crashing sound drowned out almost everything as Renard threw the table at the escaping bullies, who all cried out in shock and pain after getting hit by this unusual projectile weapon.

“What the hell are you doing?!” A loud shout silenced everyone as several students wearing red armbands appeared at the scene.

“Renard Vale, stop this at once!” Dante Krev, the Sergeant at Arms of the Student Council and head of the Disciplinary Committee, commanded. “You just came out of suspension and you’re causing trouble again?!”

“They started it!” Renard argued, not the least bit intimidated by Dante’s bulging muscles even though that sight alone could make babies cry.

The Third Year scratched his head furiously before glaring at the injured students, who were groaning in pain and sprawled all over the floor.

“Take these bastards to the infirmary!” Dante ordered before pointing at Renard as his subordinates rushed to follow his words. “And you! You come with me!”

Renard clicked his tongue in annoyance but obeyed nonetheless. He understood that if he didn’t follow Dante, his punishment might be even more severe.

As the two walked away, Alex decided to follow behind them.

“Vaan, I’ll help Renard in a bit,” Alex said. “You do what you need to do.”

“President, you already know that Renard dislikes being helped,” Vaan pointed out. “Especially if that person is you. Ever since I joined the club, I have noticed that Renard doesn’t like you.”

“I know,” Alex replied. “But that’s between the two of us.”

“Is this what they call tough love?”

“Huh? What are you talking about?”

“Nothing.” Vaan stuck out his tongue playfully before waving goodbye.

“Dim Dim?” Dim Dim blinked.

“Not you too, Dim Dim,” Alex groaned. “Of course, Vaan is a guy.”

“Dim?”

“Of course, I’m sure.”

“Dim Dim?”

“Yes! I’m really sure.”

Alex didn’t know if Dim Dim was just messing with him. Shouldn’t the Dim Sum God know for certain whether Vaan was a boy or girl?

But he had no time to think about this. He quickened his steps to make sure he didn’t lose Dante and Renard.

Sensing that someone was following them, the two teenagers turned around and saw Alex.

“Why are you following us?” Renard demanded. “This has nothing to do with you.”

“What are you talking about?” Alex smiled mischievously. “Of course, this has something to do with me. After all, I’m the club president.”

Renard clicked his tongue again and rolled his eyes, but Alex’s smile only got even more smug.

“It’s good that you’re here, Alex Stratos,” Dante stated. “Follow us. This hazing is getting out of hand.”

The student councilors weren't stupid. They knew that the other clubs, especially those with many Noble members, were targeting the members of Endless Horizon specifically.

This was why they hadn't punished Lavinia or Renard too harshly.

Instead, they had threatened the perpetrators with expulsion to ensure they wouldn't dare do it again.

Of course, the perpetrators whom the student councilors managed to catch red-handed didn't reveal that they had acted under the orders of the Nobles in Crest Clubs.

They understood that if they went against these Nobles, they would suffer for the rest of their stay in the academy.

Chapter 244: Let Sleeping Dragons Lie [Part 2]

"Look, I know you guys are being targeted by the Clubs and the Nobles who don't like your club's success during the Battle Royale," Dante stated as soon as Alex and Renard took their seats in his office.

"I'm sure some clubs have even extended invitations to your members. Though from what I know, your members have unanimously declined their enticing offers, so these clubs have either turned a blind eye to the people bullying you or have actively assisted them from the shadows."

He sighed before continuing. "I'm sure they're only waiting for you guys to reach your limit. They will keep pushing until you have no choice but to submit to them, like all the other commoners and clubs that came before you."

"Then why are you guys not doing anything about it?" Alex asked with a smile. "You already know that we are being targeted, and yet the Student Council is not doing anything. A simple announcement from President Theo will definitely make these guys hesitate, you know?"

Dante frowned because what Alex was saying was not wrong. However, it wasn't that simple.

Frieden Academy was not only a learning institution. It was also a place of politics.

There wasn't just politics between the students but among the staff as well.

While they were all students inside the academy, that didn't change the fact that outside of its walls, they were the subjects of their respective countries.

This was a fight against nobles. The royalty was usually avoided at all costs.

If possible, severe conflicts between students were resolved through a discussion mediated by the Student Council.

Unfortunately, the backers of each Crest Club weren't that easy to deal with.

They were powerful people both inside and outside the academy.

They weren't just blue-blooded but also held important positions in their kingdoms and wielded actual authority.

Even something as simple and direct as "if you don't want your family to suffer, you should obey me" was enough to make most students submit since these Nobles ruled over the regions where their parents lived.

It was an unfair and disgusting way to handle things, but this was the reality everyone had to face.

And for some reason, the Headmaster didn't interfere with the quarrels of the students.

Rowan believed that true diamonds must be polished in order to shine.

If they fell here, then they would not be able to handle the cruelty of society, which was more dangerous and more complicated than the relative safety of Frieden Academy.

Of course, some of the Professors and students thought otherwise and always did their best to protect the more vulnerable students.

The Justice Liege, which was one of the righteous Crest Clubs, had also gained fame in this manner. It also inspired many students to join their group.

“The President has a lot on his plate,” Dante replied after a minute of silence. “The aftermath of the Battle Royale is not as simple as you think. Many parents, as well as some outside influence, are blaming the Student Council and the academy staff for mishandling the Battle Royale.

“In fact, if you guys hadn’t intervened, things might have ended very differently. We were told later that Nessia Varr had managed to reverse engineer the magical formation of the Demon Worshipers, preventing the deaths of our students.

“I’m sure that the backlash would have been much more severe if even a single student had died.”

“Then,” Alex chimed in, “do you know that Nessia might be the most bullied member of my club aside from Renard?”

“What?!” Renard, who had a good relationship with any Endless Horizon member who wasn’t named Alex Stratos, was furious after learning about Nessia’s plight.

“Yes,” Alex answered. “It’s true. But unlike you who fights back, she endures passively.”

“Why the f*ck aren’t you doing anything, you dumb president?!” Renard all but snarled.

“Who says I’m not doing anything?” Alex retorted.

“Are you?”

“Nope.”

“You f*cker!”

Renard was ready to beat the living daylights out of Alex, but the latter immediately summoned Everguard to block his punch.

A dull clang echoed inside the office as fist and shield collided against each other.

“Enough!” Dante shouted. “Why are the two of you fighting when you’re supposed to be on the same side?!”

His two juniors turned to look at him. Renard clicked his tongue, and Alex curled his lips, but both of them returned to their seats without complaints.

Dante scratched the back of his head before telling Renard that he would not punish him today. Instead, he would go after the culprits that had provoked and attacked Renard.

He then asked the two troublemakers to leave his office. “Don’t fight among yourselves again. If you really must fight, go ahead but do it out of my sight.”

As the two walked down the hallway, Renard once again glared at Alex.

“How are you fine with what is happening?” Renard demanded. “I don’t mind getting bullied because I can fight back. But not everyone can or wants to fight back.

“Nessia is a girl, and I know that girls tend to handle things differently. But that doesn’t change the fact that one of your club members is getting bullied, and you’re not doing anything about it!”

Without giving Alex a chance to defend himself, Renard stormed off to look for Nessia. He was going to have a nice long talk with her.

Alex watched him go because he couldn’t refute Renard’s words.

It was all true.

He knew that Nessia was getting bullied, but he didn't do anything to stop it.

Why?

Because he didn't want to affect the progression of the story.

As long as the plot didn't change, he would be able to prepare for future events.

He had read a story in the past about a person who transmigrated into a novel and helped the main heroes and heroines by solving all their problems in advance.

However, the end result was a tragedy.

The reason was simple. If a hero was just starting out and someone else fought and defeated strong monsters in his place, he wouldn't gain any experience or grow stronger.

When it was time for the final battle, that hero might not have reached the level required to defeat the Last Boss. This failure would then lead to a Bad Ending.

This was what Alex was trying to prevent.

Perhaps, this was also the Headmaster's way of thinking and that's why he only dealt with the Demon Worshipers as well as the other factions that the students couldn't face.

Rowan had been aware of Alex's actions in the Mistral Weave Forest, but he'd turned a blind eye.

He had known that the young man had uncovered the Demon Worshipers' hidden crystals and used their strategy against them.

While he hadn't known how or why Alex had been aware of the Demon Worshipers' plan, he had decided to simply wait and see how things would unfold.

Of course, the Headmaster had also prepared an emergency measure to prevent any of the students from dying.

Even without Alex's intervention, the Demon Worshipers wouldn't have been able to kill a single student.

However, the harrowing experience had taught the students to be prepared for any situation.

This was also what Professor Rowan had wanted them to learn from the Battle Royale. It was a tough kind of love, but he firmly believed that students needed to experience hardships to grow into better individuals.

After separating from Renard, Alex didn't head back to the Ironheart Dormitory.

Instead, he headed to the clock tower.

When he arrived at their club room, he noticed something different.

There was a spiral staircase at the rightmost corner of the room. It hadn't been there before.

Alex knew what this signified, but he was still surprised.

'Has Nessia discovered the Codex of Eternal Weave?' Alex wondered. 'It happened a month earlier than expected.'

The moment Nessia finished deciphering that Codex, she would learn more about Rune Magic. Thanks to this discovery, she would eventually become the Rune Saintess.

In order to confirm the suspicion, Alex climbed the stairs and entered a place that was surrounded by galaxies.

It was like he was in outer space. In the distance, he saw a young lady with neatly braided hair. She was sitting cross-legged, reading the thick tome in her hands.

She looked so focused that for a moment Alex thought he could see laser beams being shot out of her eyes.

Once in a while, Nessia would draw runes in the air. They danced around her like little children who wanted to play.

She was drawing the runes she had seen in the book as practice.

"How long do you plan to stare, Alex?" Nessia asked without looking up from her book.

"I am just checking to see if you are alright," Alex answered. "Well, then. I'll return to the club room."

"Okay." Nessia nodded as she flipped a page.

This book wasn't easy to read. She needed to use Rune Magic to decipher the ancient words, many of which she was seeing for the first time.

Although difficult, she continued to persevere. This book consisted of a series of tutorials that could teach her how to use Rune Magic effectively. Once she succeeded, she'd be much stronger.

Of course, no matter how much of a genius she was, it would still take Nessia a few months to half a year to master its contents.

Alex felt satisfied. He had chosen the Clock Tower because he knew it held many secrets that could help his club members grow stronger. However, whether they would find these opportunities or not was completely up to them.

The young man had already prepared the stage. It was now up to the actors and actresses to weave their magic and paint the world in the colors that belonged only to them.

Alex gave Nessia one last glance before going down the staircase.

He then looked at the bed where Latifa was sleeping and smiled.

The young fox lady was wearing pink pajamas and hugging her favorite bolster as she slept peacefully.

When he told Vaan that Latifa was a sleeping dragon, he was telling the truth.

The moment this sleeping beauty decided to fight, very few individuals of the same rank as her could force her into a draw.

After all, she was the hidden Mini Boss of the academy, and her backstory wouldn't lose to any of the Main Heroes and Heroines of Endless Leveling Online.

Chapter 245: I Can Be Your Strongest Ally Or Strongest Enemy [Part 1]

"I have gathered all of you today for an important discussion," Chuck declared as he eyed his club members, who were seated at their round table.

"I'm sure that all of you have been subjected to all sorts of harassment and bullying in the three weeks since the Battle Royale ended. At first, I thought that the harassment would stop after a week or two, but it's only getting worse."

Chuck then glanced at Alex, who was paying close attention to what he was saying. This made him remember that no one had actually targeted their president all this time!

He could understand why Princess Xenia and Vaan weren't targeted, but Alex?

The young man represented their club and yet no one dared to target him!

Chuck wondered if no one was harassing Alex because he wasn't as good looking. Maybe Chuck was bullied so much because he stood out thanks to his handsomeness!

But enough was enough!

If he was going to suffer, wouldn't it be fair for his roommate to also share some of that suffering?!

Of course, Chuck didn't voice out his inner thoughts because that was not the reason why he had called for this meeting.

"Like I said, things are only getting worse," Chuck stated. "Renard and Lavinia have already been suspended twice and it's not a good thing. Likewise, I have to always do my best to make myself scarce because those bastards flock to me like flies to honey."

Chuck paused dramatically before continuing, "Tell me, what can we do in order to stop this madness? I already informed the Student Council and the Professors about this, but all I got was 'We'll look into the matter' and nothing has changed!

"Also, it is not only that blasted Lionheart Society that is targeting us. Even nobles from other Crest Clubs seem to have joined the fun! There is even a rumor that the Obsidian Fang has been helping fan the flames because a certain club president said something towards a sister of one of their members!"

"Um, who is that club president and what was said to the sister?" Vaan asked in curiosity.

"Who else," Chuck replied, "but our very own club president?"

"And what did he say to her?" Lavinia asked.

“When Lapiz asked Alex who he was, do you know how he answered?” Chuck’s voice was filled with disdain. “He said, ‘I’m your future husband!’ Can you believe it? I certainly couldn’t!”

Several emotions—none of them positive—rippled across Lavinia’s face before she quickly composed herself.

As for Vaan... He only smiled with amusement and yet that smile didn’t reach his eyes.

Renard clicked his tongue and shot Alex a baleful look. Clearly, he was blaming his president for all the bullying he had faced the past three weeks.

“So, I ask you, Mr. President, what should we do to stop them?” Chuck demanded. “I’m sure the others have also been exposed to harassment and bullying. This mustn’t go on because, well, it stresses me out.”

Alex glanced at Nessia instead of replying. Her eyes were still fixed on the Codex in her hands, but she had not flipped a page since the beginning of the meeting.

She had been paying attention to Chuck’s words and was now waiting for Alex’s answer.

It wasn’t only her.

Charles, Renard, Lavinia, Princess Xenia, Vaan, and even Lotte, who was currently on guard duty, all wanted to hear what Alex would say next.

“I see, so the time has finally come for our counterattack,” Alex replied with a smile. “Truth be told, I am also a little pissed because they tried to kidnap Dim Dim.”

“”What?!”” Lavinia and Nessia looked at Alex and Dim Dim in surprise.

“Ahem!” Dim Dim stood a little straighter and told everyone its story.

It mentioned how it had thrown stink bombs at the two Fourth Years attempting to kidnap it.

After Dim Dim finished its story, the club members clapped their hands, making the little bun become prouder of its accomplishments.

"I have been waiting for you guys to ask for my help," Alex explained. "I know that you guys aren't weak and can handle things on your own. But being passive is not the answer.

"We must make these people realize that we are not pushovers. We will make them understand that harassing us is the worst possible choice that they can pick because it will only lead to mutual destruction."

"So, how will we counterattack?" Chuck rubbed his hands. "I want them to cough out blood!"

"I want them to suffer!" Renard seconded. "I want to beat the crap out of them!"

Lavinia nodded in agreement. Nessia did not say anything, but clearly she was not against the sentiment.

"Oh they will suffer alright, but not in a way that you guys think of," Alex went on. "I mean, they must compensate us for our troubles."

"What are you going to do, Alex?" Vaan pressed. His smile was now more genuine. "Come on. Stop the suspense and spill the beans."

The cute boy could smell mischief and this was something that he was very interested in.

"Dim Dim!" Dim Dim raised its hand.

"Okay, what do you propose, Dim Dim?" Alex asked. The little bun seemed to have thought of a plan.

"Dim Dim!"

“Huh?” Chuck blinked. “Let Alex use the Broadcasting Club’s facilities and sing everyone a song?”

“Dim Dim!”

“And threaten the academy that he will continue to sing until the bullying stops completely?”

Dim Dim nodded. “Dim!”

Other than the Dim Sum God, none of the members of Endless Horizon knew how absolutely diabolical Alex’s singing was. Dim Dim believed it was a psychological and biological weapon that would not only be very effective against the students but the staff as well!

Alex cocked his head before lightly patting the head of the little bun, who looked very pleased with its proposal.

“Dim Dim, letting them hear my singing is a reward, you know?” Alex said.

“Dim!” Dim Dim shook its head. “Dim Dim!”

“Um? What do you mean that my singing sounds like an eldritch abomination’s shrieks and can even wake Latifa up? Is this simile so strange because my singing is indescribably good?”

“Dim!”

“Awww. You’re so cute.”

Alex lightly squeezed the Dim Sum Bun’s cheeks. The girls—and Vaan—could melt at the sight of the adorable little bun.

Chuck didn't know if Dim Dim was cracking a joke to ease the tension in the room.

"President, do you have a way to make them stop?" Chuck inquired. "You look very certain that you can put a stop to their harassment."

"Of course I am confident," Alex answered. "After all, everyone has skeletons in their closets, especially the Crest Clubs."

Alex cracked an evil smile. He had played the Story Mode of ELO dozens of times.

He had joined every Crest Club and learnt of the things hidden within the confines of their club rooms.

Now, what would they do if Alex suddenly compiled those things and exposed them to the public?

That would practically be a nuclear attack against the fools who thought that they could bully his club!

But Alex's strategy wasn't so simple.

Those in positions of power feared letting others, especially the masses, know their deepest and darkest secrets.

"Give me a week and I'll put a complete stop to this nonsense," Alex promised. "You guys just lie low for a while."

"Alex, I can tell that you are up to no good." Vaan's voice was so sweet it was cloying. "Can I join in the fun?"

"Sure," Alex answered.

The young man could tell that Vaan also liked mischief.

Also, he wanted to know more about this tragic heir of a fallen noble family, who should have died in the Mistral Weave Forest.

With the exception of Vaan, Alex was familiar with the abilities of his club members. The only thing he knew about Vaan was that he was very proficient with the spear.

And that's it. That was all the information he had.

Alex thought that this might be a good opportunity for him to get to know how the teenage boy thought and whether he could be trusted with more important duties in the future.

Lavinia hesitated a bit before telling Alex that she also wished to join him in whatever he planned to do.

Alex readily agreed because having Lavinia around was also a good thing.

The time for his club's counterattack was about to start, and he would make sure that they were properly compensated for their troubles.

"By the way, Lotte, I also need your help," Alex told Latifa's Second Alter, who was closest to him.

Most of the time, Lumi was wandering about, so they had only met on a few occasions.

Chapter 246: I Can Be Your Strongest Ally Or Strongest Enemy [Part 2]

Cassandra eyed the visitor, who was peacefully sipping his cup of tea, with a scowl.

Alex had visited the Student Council right after classes ended and asked to talk to Theo in private.

However, Cassandra wouldn't allow such a thing to happen, so she insisted that she stay inside the club room even as the rest of the members were asked to leave.

“So, tell me why you are here,” Theo began. “Is this about the harassment that your club members are facing?”

“It is related to that, yes,” Alex answered.

“Did you come here to ask me to put a stop to it?” Theo inquired, a playful smile hanging on his lips.

“Not really.”

“Then why are you here?” Cassandra asked, unable to contain her curiosity.

“I just came here to inform the president that it’s time for our club to counterattack,” Alex stated. “And I will be doing it during the Student Assembly.”

Theo’s playful smile gave way to a frown. “That’s tomorrow.”

“Yes,” Alex answered.

“... You know you can be punished for doing such a thing, right?” Theo asked solemnly.

“Of course I know,” Alex replied. “In truth, I can do it without leaving any evidence tying it back to me. However, I’m informing you because I want to be polite.”

“Hah? You want to be polite by causing trouble during the weekly assembly?” Cassandra scoffed. “Are you out of your mind?”

“I’m perfectly fine.” Alex smiled. “Like I said, I can do it without leaving any traces behind, so I don’t actually need to tell you about it.”

“Then why did you inform us about it?” Theo was beginning to suspect the real reason why Alex had asked to talk to him in private.

“Because,” Alex declared conspiratorially as he leaned forward, “it will also benefit you, President. I know that you still have many who oppose you here in the academy. And it just so happens that those people are the ones targeting our club right now.”

Theo’s expression betrayed nothing.

“What if I tell you that I will give you the means to deal with them while I mess around with them at the same time? Since we will be hitting two birds with one stone, I thought that it would be great if we could collaborate together.”

Finally, the club president narrowed his eyes in interest. Although he headed the Student Council, there was still some opposition and at times they could truly be a pain to deal with.

If he could gain the ability to make them suffer or submit to him, then wouldn’t that be for the best?

“Tell me more about your plans,” Theo said cautiously. “And what kind of help do you require from the Student Council? You do know that you are being watched by the other students, right? They will also know that you visited us here.

“The fact that I sent my club members outside will also reach the ears of the masterminds behind the harassment of your club...”

Suddenly, Theo’s eyes widened before a cold hiss escaped his lips.

“You... you plan to drag the Student Council into the mess, right?” Theo didn’t have any evidence, but he realized that Alex might have purposely allowed the people observing him to know that he had been granted a private audience with the Student Council President.

What Alex’s reasons were exactly, Theo did not know. What he did know was that Alex’s trick had succeeded.

As a schemer, he was well aware of such tricks. To be on the receiving end of one such trick left a bad aftertaste in his mouth.

If something happened during tomorrow's assembly, people might link it to Alex and, by extension, link it to Theo because the two had met the day before.

Even if he turned down Alex's invitation now, those who hated him would assume that he had also played a role in whatever fiasco the mysterious young man was planning.

Simply put, Alex wished to force him to become his accomplice!

"You're really smart, President." Alex put his cup back on the table. "It is exactly as you said. I just need people to see that I came to visit you today."

"Cassandra!" Theo ordered.

Immediately, the young lady tied Alex using a magical rope, holding him in place.

"You're pushing your luck too far, young man," Theo said coldly. "You are only a First Year and yet you already dare to challenge your seniors. Do you really think that I will let you tarnish our reputation? You're still too green, Alex Stratos."

"You think so?" Alex smirked. "Since the Student Council didn't make any move to deal with the harassment, I decided to make you understand that you should have at least put in some effort and not turn a blind eye to what was happening."

"You know, things wouldn't have escalated to this point if you had stepped in and announced that anyone targeting our club would be punished severely. If you had done that, even the Crest Clubs would have reconsidered."

“Unfortunately, you thought that this would bring down our club a peg and force us to bow our heads like every other club that the Crest Clubs had bullied in the past. But you know what? Endless Horizon is built differently.”

Theo didn’t deny or affirm Alex’s statement. He simply gazed at Alex as if studying an interesting specimen.

The young man remained calm, confident even, despite being bound tightly by magical rope that was very hard to destroy.

“We will detain you until the assembly is finished,” Theo stated. “I will not let you have your way.”

“Oh, it’s a little too late for that,” Alex replied. “Any minute now...”

As soon as Alex said those words, a knock was heard on the door.

“President, Aeris Nocturne is here,” Lucius, who was guarding the door along with Dante, announced. “She said that she needs to talk to Alex.”

“Tell her that we are in the middle of an important discussion,” Theo, who had no intention of letting Alex go, replied.

However, when he looked at Alex, he saw that the visitor was smiling smugly as if everything was in his control.

“President, Ms. Aeris added that if she doesn’t see Alex now, she will not conceal what happened a year ago during the election for student councillors.”

The moment Lucius finished conveying Aeris’ message, Theo’s eyes widened in shock and disbelief. Meanwhile, Alex’s smirk defied the limitations of his facial muscles and stretched closer to his ears.

"I told you, right?" Alex said. "It's already too late. Either you cooperate with me or we both burn in hell together. The choice is, of course, in your hands. However, I have faith that you will choose wisely."

"What did you tell her?" Theo asked icily.

"I told her just enough to ensure that if you don't do as she says you might find yourself regretting some of your past decisions," Alex answered. "Well then, do you wish to burn bridges or will you accept a toast? Regardless of your choice, I will still be leaving this room in five minutes."

Alex was no fool. He had already laid down the groundwork and prepared countermeasures just in case he and Theo didn't see eye to eye.

Theo had done many underhanded things before getting elected.

In simple terms, he hadn't become the president fair and square.

Some subtle manipulation and blackmail had forced his competition to back down at the last moment.

Although he was fairly confident that he had left no evidence behind, there was no way to know for absolute certainty.

Seeing Alex's cocky smile made him waver a bit because if he had indeed left damning evidence—and someone had gotten their grubby little hands on it—things would get very bad for him very quickly.

"President, you don't have to think too hard, you know?" Alex said. "I am a very flexible and open-minded person. I can be your strongest ally or your strongest enemy. The choice is entirely yours."

Alex understood that if he wanted to make sure that his club members never get bothered again, he would need the authority of the Student Council President.

Besides, getting Theo on his side would bring a lot of benefits. In the future, they would need to help each other when facing further attacks from the Demon Worshipers and other nefarious factions. There was no harm in forging an alliance with Theo now rather than later.

To Alex, the Student Council could become his strongest ally or his strongest enemy as well.

Both routes were available in the game, but Alex had already made his decision. By hook or by crook, Theo Ashborne would form an alliance with him!

Although Lotte was confused, she agreed to help. Since Latifa was now a member of Endless Horizon, that meant that Lotte was also one of its club members.

Chapter 247: Alex's Ultimate Guidebook

Many eyes couldn't help but stick to the two students walking side by side.

Beside an elven beauty with long silver hair was a handsome, well-built young man.

They looked like a match made in heaven, save for the invisible pressure emanating from the beautiful elf, who seemed to be annoyed at the moment.

The young man also happened to be smiling most insufferably.

The two walked together for a few minutes until they arrived in what seemed to be a cave, with an entrance made up of obsidian.

A single fang was etched on the black gate, indicating that this was the headquarters of the Obsidian Fang.

"Come in," Aeris said as she pushed the gate open.

Alex followed behind her, not feeling intimidated in the slightest.

Several members of Obsidian Fang, who had been waiting for their president's arrival, glanced at Alex who was walking about two meters behind her.

When the young man noticed a familiar face among those looking at him, he gave that person a wink. Despite the tension in the room, the person nodded her head in acknowledgement.

She was none other than Phoebe Amaris of the Silver Horn Tribe.

The young lady who had suggested that Renard join Alex's club instead of Obsidian Fang.

After walking through what seemed like a maze of tunnels, Aeris and Alex finally arrived at a room.

"Come in." Aeris opened the door and waited for Alex to enter first.

The young man dipped his head in thanks and entered the room as he was asked to do.

The room looked like the sleek offices of young, handsome, yet inexplicably single CEOs in romantic comedies.

Clearly, this was the place where the Presidents of Obsidian Fang conducted their business with important people.

"Please have a seat and fulfill the promise you made to me," Aeris said as soon as she sat down.

Alex could see that the elf was very annoyed. After all, a First Year had just used her to bail him out of the Student Council Room.

An hour before his meeting with Theo, Alex had gone to the Club Room of the Obsidian Fang and asked to have a private meeting with Aeris, the club president.

"I know you are going to challenge the Darkest Dungeon, but if you don't listen to my advice, many of your members will die there."

Those were the words that Alex had said to Aeris during their first meeting.

Back then, she had dismissed his warning as nonsense and warned him to leave while she was still in a good mood.

However, Alex had brought up a few things about the Dungeon, including information that only the members of Obsidian Fang should only know.

"I will tell you how to prevent your members from dying on one condition," Alex had said back then. "I will enter the student council room soon. If I'm not out within thirty minutes, come and get me out of there by any means necessary."

"And what if Theo refuses?" Aeris had asked.

"Simple," Alex had replied. "Just say that if you don't see me right now, you will let others know what happened a year ago during the campaigning period of the Student Council election."

"That's it?"

"That's it."

And just as Alex had predicted, Theo decided to release the young man. That made Aeris wonder about what had really happened during last year's election. After all, there was no smoke without fire.

"I don't see that little bun who's always with you," Aeris commented.

"Dim Dim is my Plan B," Alex answered. "Just in case Plan A didn't work. Fortunately, Theo gave up as soon as he heard your threat."

"A threat I have no idea about."

“That’s the problem with smart people like Theo. They tend to think about all the possibilities that might endanger their position. It worked perfectly because he is a smart person. Lastly, he understood that there was more to gain by not making me an enemy.”

Aeris eyed the young man stonily. She could feel her dislike of him growing stronger.

During the Battle Royale, she had kept her eye on Lapid. She had seen Lapid chance upon Alex.

Of course, she had heard Alex declaring that he was Lapid’s future husband. There had been a collective gasp from the seniors watching. Coincidentally, the cup in Aeris’ hand had shattered at that exact moment too.

And now, her self-proclaimed future brother-in-law was sitting right in front of her. She realized this was a good chance to strangle him and prevent future problems from happening. However, she resisted the urge. For now.

“What are you planning, Alex Stratos?” Aeris asked. “Why did you meet me and the Student Council President?”

“I’m just laying down the foundations for a big surprise that will happen tomorrow,” Alex replied mysteriously. “You should look forward to it.”

“A surprise for whom?” Aeris pressed.

“For the people who have been making life difficult my club members. Don’t worry, I know you look down on such behavior and that your club has no part in it. The Lionheart Society has been spreading rumors that you ordered your people to target me. Luckily, I can easily see past their paper-thin attempt to damage your reputation.”

The young lady narrowed her eyes before shifting the topic back to the Darkest Dungeon.

“You said that if I don’t listen to you, many of my members will die,” Aeris stated. “We have made ample preparations, so we believe we will be able to at least reach the fifth floor and fight the Boss without problems.”

Aeris was a Rank 4 Radiant Valkyrie.

It was a Hidden Class that only those worthy of it could get.

She was confident in her martial and magical abilities, especially since they were why the previous president of Obsidian Fang had chosen her as successor.

Alex also knew that before Aeris graduated from the academy, she would become a Rank 5 Radiant Valkyrie, as befitting one of the Main Heroines of ELO.

“There’s nothing wrong with that mindset,” Alex said. “But it’s always good to remind ourselves that overconfidence is an insidious killer. The Darkest Dungeon is no place for the weak or the foolhardy.”

“Are you saying that me and my club members are weak?” Aeris arched an eyebrow.

“Of course not.” Alex smiled diplomatically as he took out a small notebook from his storage ring and handed it to Aeris.

The young lady took it and read the words written on its cover.

The Ultimate Guide to Darkest Dungeon: From the First Floor to the Fifth!

A frown appeared on Aeris’ face. She raised her eyes to look at Alex just to make sure he wasn’t messing with her.

“Just read it,” Alex insisted. “You’ll understand after a few pages.”

Aeris decided to humor her guest and opened the book.

She wasn't expecting much from it, but after reading for only a minute, her expression went from skeptical to serious.

Alex watched as the president of the Obsidian Fang carefully read the strategy guide that he had made yesterday.

He had used 200 Arcana Points to create this guide, and it was sure worth it.

As it might take a while for Aeris to finish reading, Alex excused himself because he had plenty of things to do.

"I'm sure you have many questions you want to ask me, but now is not the time for that," Alex said as he got up from his seat. "Just read the guide and make sure your club members stay alive."

Alex could still remember Aeris' and Lapis's devastated expressions after they escaped the Darkest Dungeon in his previous playthroughs.

While they did prepare extensively for their Dungeon Expedition, they simply couldn't prepare for what they didn't know. Some of the monsters they encountered had secret traits and abilities that took them by surprise.

This cost them dearly. Other members of Obsidian Fang sacrificed themselves just so Aeris and Lapis could escape.

Alex didn't want the two ladies to experience that heartbreak this time around, so he decided to extend a hand to prevent that tragedy.

'After this, I hope I'll have a good relationship with Obsidian Fang,' Alex thought. 'Now, all the preparations for tomorrow are set.'

It had taken Alex nearly a week to put together the “surprise” that would end the bullying once and for all.

Nessia and Lotte had played a role in this operation as well. The former looked especially happy since she understood what Alex was planning to do.

Nessia was smart and adaptable, but the relentless bullying had taken a toll on her.

Given her tough mentality, she had not lost all hope. But she was not a pushover either, so her grudge had been silently accumulating. Knowing she couldn’t do anything just yet, she put all her pent-up indignance into motivation.

After discovering the Codex of Eternal Weave, her knowledge about Rune Magic had increased drastically.

As she had only read a portion of the book, the things she learned were only the tip of the iceberg. But that was enough to make her regain some confidence.

Alex could also tell that a shift had happened to the young lady’s personality. To be more specific, some of his bad influence had, for better or for worse, rubbed off on her.

Lotte had originally been quite hesitant to help Alex, but after he had successfully convinced her, Latifa’s second Alter had gone above and beyond, allowing them to succeed in their plan.

And now, they only needed to wait for the student assembly to start and bring about chaos to the fools who had dared to bully the Endless Horizon club.

Chapter 248: King of Blackmail [Part 1]

The Student Assembly happened twice every month.

It happened every second, and fourth week of the month, and was held during Friday mornings.

Usually, the Headmaster or the Student Council President would make a speech. They sometimes commended outstanding students.

It was also an opportunity to inform the students about upcoming school events.

Theo and the other student councillors walked up to the stage before turning to face the assembled students.

They then pressed their hands over their chest and waited for the school anthem to play, which everyone sang together.

Theo sang confidently, but deep inside he was wondering what Alex was planning to do.

He subconsciously glanced in the direction of the First Years, but he didn't see the young man among his classmates.

'Just what is he planning to do?' Theo wondered as the song came to an end. 'I hope he doesn't do anything too reckless.'

The Headmaster was currently away on a trip, which meant that it was the Student Council's turn to address the students.

This included giving an explanation of what had happened in the Mistral Weave Forest during the Battle Royale.

Theo also apologized for not making contingency plans that could have thwarted the Demon Worshipers' attack.

He promised everyone that he would be more mindful when planning future events. The Student Council vowed to prioritize the safety of the students above all else.

His face was projected behind him and his voice was magnified so that even students who sat far away from the stage could see and hear him.

As his speech drew to a close, something unexpected happened.

Theo's enlarged image behind him disappeared and was replaced by a person wearing a mask.

This would have been an intimidating sight if not for the fact that on that person's head was a little bun who was hiding its identity by wearing gangster sunglasses!

While the First Years didn't recognize the masked person, they certainly recognized Dim Dim!

"Ladies and gentlemen, I'm very sorry to interrupt President Theo's speech, but I need to show you something very important," the masked person—who was obviously Alex—declared. "Please, enjoy the show!"

He then vanished from the projection, but a scene of a few people seated on a luxurious sofa took his place.

Those people who saw themselves on the couch stiffened. They had a good idea of what was about to happen next.

"Guys, I did it!" a young man with dark brown hair exclaimed with a triumphant grin. "I managed to steal Professor Arienna's favorite cup from the music room. The next underground academy auction will certainly be a blast!"

"Wait, Professor Arienna's cup? The one she always drinks from?"

"Yes!"

"Did you..."

“Yes! I drank from it! It was the best!”

“Damn! You are so lucky!”

Professor Arienna’s jaw dropped after hearing those words.

“Only her favorite cup?” Caspian, who was seated beside the young man, smirked. “I managed to get pictures of Professor Selwin sleeping. Without her glasses too! I can’t believe that our Alchemy Teacher is such a hottie! I will sell these pictures in the auction as well.”

Professor Selwin blinked a couple of times before looking at the Second Years. Caspian, whose face was already bloodless from fright, practically collapsed when her gaze finally landed on him

“T-This is fake!” Caspian shouted. “This thing didn’t happen! I’m being framed!”

However, the projection kept on playing.

“By the way, I have successfully planted a tracking spell on the bag of that commoner girl from that upstart club,” a lecherous looking noble with blond hair added. “How about we have some fun with her after school?”

“Are you serious?” Caspian frowned. “What will you do if the Professors find out about it?”

“No one will find out,” the lecherous noble said confidently. “I have threatened one of her commoner classmates into obeying me just by mentioning her family’s address! She will drug that Endless Horizon girl’s drink so that we can bring her here. It has been a while since I have tormented a commoner. The thrill is the real deal.”

“I don’t know man, that sounds dangerous,” Caspian said slowly. “If the academy finds out, you will get expelled.”

“The club president is also doing it, so why can’t we? I’m sure that he will approve of it. He might even join the fun. So, are you guys coming or not?”

“I’ll pass.” Caspian firmly shook his head. “Taking Professor Arienna’s cup and Professor Selwin’s pictures is very different from torture. I don’t have that kind of hobby.”

“Hah... you’re still too green, Caspian.” The pervert cracked an ugly smile. “But that’s fine. I won’t judge you. You can have fun with Professor Selwin’s pictures, but that won’t get you anywhere, man.”

With that, the scene changed. This time, it was in the private office of the Merchant Alliance.

It showed how the members manipulated the prices of textbooks as well as other school supplies to gain a hefty profit.

During their conversation, they implicitly admitted that they were price gouging merely because the other students couldn’t fight back!

“We are the Merchant Alliance. We control the economy of the academy,” the Vice President said haughtily. “Even the ingredients and food supplied to the academy are under our control.

“So, why not increase the price a bit? I’m sure that no one will complain. Even if someone asks, we can always say that our meat comes from Everglen City, which has been plagued with a drought.”

Another member laughed cruelly. “Just remember not to smile too obviously when you tell those nosy people that our hands are tied!”

Three more Crest Clubs, who had played no small part in the harassment of Alex’s club members, found themselves in the spotlight as the magical projection continued to play.

They started to panic. Like Caspian, they claimed that the videos were faked to frame them.

To everyone’s surprise, it didn’t end with the Crest Clubs.

Children of Barons, Viscounts, Earls, Marquess, and even Dukes all had their turn on the screen.

As more and more Noble students descended into incoherence, Theo's lips curled up.

The people having their moment of fame all belonged to factions that opposed the Student Council. Alex was practically handing Theo the opportunity to investigate and punish them.

After the last scene ended, the masked man popped up once more.

"Did you see all that?" the masked man asked. "I assure you that everything you just saw is true! But you know what? Those things are just the tip of the iceberg. I have many more pieces of evidence with me that can potentially get you kicked out of your families.

"However, I am a kind and merciful person. I won't want to see you disowned either! Therefore, I will give you a chance to make up for your misdeeds. The Lionheart Society must pay me two million academy points before this day ends or I will use the evidence I have to dissolve your club.

"Also, don't say nonsensical things like 'this is fake' or whatnot. Caspian, have you forgotten about the artifact that Professor Gareth used? All he needs to do is visit your club room and he will be able to unearth other secrets that will... Hehehe.... You already know what I'm getting at, right?

"As for the Merchant Alliance, I'll just ask you to pay me one million academy points. The same can be said for the three other Crest Clubs, whose names I can't be bothered to say.

"This is what you get for bullying Endless Horizon. You want to fight me? B*tch! You guys are just kids in my eyes."

"Dim Dim!" Dim Dim shouted telling Alex not to curse.

"Um, Sorry. But, Dim Dim, don't say anything," the masked man reminded. "We are hiding our identities, remember?"

“Dim!” Dim Dim nodded apologetically.

“Anyway! Make sure to pass the payment to Alex Stratos before this day ends,” the masked presenter threatened. “I have made several copies of the evidence and handed them to two Professors that I trust.

“They have already seen it and frankly, if not for me convincing them to let me handle this, you would be talking directly to the Headmaster after he returns! So, don’t do anything funny because I will destroy you and end your careers. You ain’t seen nothing yet.

“Remember, all of you must meet with my middleman, Alex Stratos, before this day ends or you will surely regret it!”

As soon as the masked man finished his announcement, Theo’s smirking face appeared on the giant projection.

“Well then, I believe this warrants an investigation by the Student Council,” Theo said calmly. “These are very serious allegations and if found to be true, the culprits will be dealt with accordingly.”

He then glanced at Caspian, whose ears were being pulled by the Alchemy Professor, Lady Selwin.

The teenage boy was apologizing profusely, vowing that he would never take her pictures without permission again.

As for the person who had designs on Nessia, Alex would ensure that he got kicked out of the academy without fail.

Even if Alex didn’t do anything, the President of the Lionheart Society would throw that degenerate under the bus to save himself.

On that day, the academy suffered a shock that they didn’t expect, which made them give Alex a new nickname.

King of Blackmail.

And from now on, no Crest Clubs, or any other Noble Families, dared to bully the members of his club ever again.

Chapter 249: King of Blackmail [Part 2]

The entire academy was in uproar.

A single First Year and a little bun perched on top of his head had just created history.

They made a feat that no one might be capable of replicating ever again.

And what was that feat?

Making all the Crest Clubs, Nobles, staff, and every other student remember and fear his name.

Alex Stratos.

The President of Endless Horizon.

The Singing King.

And now he had gained a new title.

The King of Blackmail.

The chaos that ensued afterward gave Theo the chance to use his authority and restore order. This forced all the students and, to a certain extent, the staff to calm down and leave the rest to him.

Caspian, already crying from shame and pain as his ears were being pulled by a fuming Professor Selwin, wept tears of joy when the Student Council came to take him away.

He would rather be punished by the councilors than face the wrath of the Alchemy Professor, who had vowed to lock him in a room filled with screaming mandrakes.

An hour later, several individuals were gathered in the Student Council Conference Room.

They were the leaders of the twelve Crest Clubs, as well as some Nobles whose bad behavior had been exposed during the assembly.

There was also a young man who didn't belong to the Crest Clubs or Student Council.

Caspian and the other wrongdoers glared at him, but he only blinked innocently.

"Hey guys, I know I'm handsome," Alex said. "But if you keep staring at me like that, even I will feel embarrassed."

"You sure have guts, Alex Stratos," said Chester Blackvale, the president of the Lionheart Society, with ice in his voice. "You dared to frame us all with your nonsense!"

The well-dressed young man with too much pomade in his hair wanted more than anything in the world to give Alex a good thrashing, but he knew that would just get him into even more trouble. His blue eyes were filled with hatred, but within their depths, there were other emotions present as well.

Fear and anxiety, as well as shame. However, Alex only smirked. In his eyes, the person before him wasn't the son of the Duke of Blackvale but a guilty, bratty kid who had gotten his secrets exposed.

"What nonsense?" Alex asked. "Calm down. I don't know what you're talking about. Make no mistake. I am not the masked man you saw earlier. That was a different person. I'm just the middleman who would collect academy points on his behalf."

The young man's tone was calm, even conciliatory, but that just made those he had offended want to spit in his face for lying so blatantly.

Just a single glance at the little bun that was perched on top of his head—who was still wearing its gangster sunglasses—was enough to tell everyone that the young man was spouting bullsh*t.

Besides, he was wearing the same clothes as the masked man. The only difference was that he wasn't wearing a mask right now. Even his voice matched the bastard who had exposed everyone to the public.

"You piece of sh*t!" the President of the Merchant Alliance, Preston Kingsley, cursed out loud. "You will pay for this!"

The chubby Third Year with short red hair and a greasy, pimply face glared at Alex as if he owed him a million gold coins.

"Really?" Alex blinked. "But I'm very sure the ones doing the paying right now are you guys, no?"

"You have offended many great people!" Caspian yelled while jabbing his finger against Alex's chest. "You will not be able to live when you step out of this academy. Do you have no idea who you have messed with? Their families can pinch you like a bug."

"Well, I don't know anything about these families you are talking about," Alex answered. "But do you know who my uncle is? He alone can make all of your backers pinch you guys like bugs."

"Who is your uncle?" Caspian laughed disdainfully. "Name him!"

"My uncle is the Headmaster," Alex replied. "Uncle Rowan Vademont. What's wrong? Can your family pinch him like a bug?"

Everyone in the room quietened down and looked at Alex in disbelief.

Professor Gareth, who was one of the Professors observing this meeting, couldn't help but cover his face from the secondhand embarrassment. Alex was not only good at blackmailing people, but he was also very good at making sh*t up!

"Lies!" Caspian shouted. "All lies!"

"Calm down, bro," Alex said. "You'll know if I'm telling the truth or not once your daddy dearest comes to the academy and spank you in front of everyone. But for now, can we just finish the transaction? It's almost lunchtime."

Aeris and the other Presidents of the Crest Clubs who hadn't been implicated had been watching Alex since earlier.

Some of them were masters of reading body language. However, they were not perfectly objective. At first, they had assumed that Alex was just trying to sound calm despite feeling deeply anxious.

But to their surprise, his body language, voice, and gaze showed no sign of uncertainty. It was as if he really believed he had everything under his control!

Even when confronted by the heirs of various Noble families, he looked as if he was talking to people of the same rank as him.

"I want you to apologize to all of us and tell the students that everything you have shown them is a lie," Chester commanded. "Otherwise..."

"One more word from you, and the compensation the Lionheart Society has to pay will increase to three million," Alex threatened.

"Ha," Chester scoffed. "You th—"

"Okay. It's now three million," Alex interrupted. "One more word, and it's going to become four million. I'm sure you think no one here can prove the things that you and your club members are doing behind closed doors."

“But Professor Gareth has the ability to expose your crimes. If you doubt my words, you can ask Caspian and that young man standing behind you if I’m telling the truth or not.”

Alex pointed at the Officer of the Lionheart Society, who had been with Caspian on the day of Dim Dim’s kidnapping attempt.

They had seen how Professor Gareth had used an artifact to reenact the crime scene. That was undisputable evidence that couldn’t be overlooked.

What they did not know was that Professor Gareth had also determined the Memory Dial’s credibility when investigating Lucius’ disappearance. If the need ever arose, he could be counted on to defend its trustworthiness.

Chester frowned because Caspian and his subordinate had indeed told them about their failed attempt to kidnap Dim Dim.

If what the two teenagers said was true, then the Professor might uncover more secrets if he stepped into the Lionheart Society’s Club Room.

“You’ll pay for this,” Chester said coldly.

“No.” Alex shook his head. “YOU are the one who is going to pay. Now the Lionheart Society owes me four million.”

The President of the Merchant Alliance was about to say something, but his gut instincts were telling him that Alex was serious.

As a merchant, he felt the loss of one million academy points keenly. Although the club had more than ten million academy points, this had been slowly accumulated by generations of presidents.

To think he would be the one squandering his predecessors’ hard work!

Just as Chester was about to dig a bigger hole for himself, a voice cut him off.

“That’s enough, President.”

The one speaking was none other than Prince Edward Von Morwyn, the third Prince of the Kingdom of Avalon and the Vice President of the Lionheart Society.

“Alex Stratos, we cannot pay you four million academy points,” Prince Edward stated. “At most, we can only pay you one million.”

“No deal,” Alex replied. “Either you pay me, or you dissolve your club. That’s your only choice right now, Your Highness.”

“You call me Your Highness, but I don’t sense any tinge of respect in your voice,” Prince Edward remarked with a faint smile.

“That’s because here in the academy, every student is equal, no?” Alex said. “It is only the nobility who can’t let go of their ranks. Why keep forcing everyone to treat you lots as a superior?”

“I think it’s about time that things returned to how they used to be in the past. That was the ideal on which my uncle founded the academy.”

“You’re still sticking to that bald-faced lie that the Headmaster is your uncle.” Prince Edward smirked.

“That’s because it’s the truth,” Alex answered.

Alex technically wasn’t lying. When Players created their custom characters, they were allowed to add Flavor Text to their background story.

Some said that they were the descendants of the Sword Saint, while others claimed that they were the secret child of the Heavenly Demon or the Demonic Cult.

It might be a bunch of nonsense, but just like how NPCs remembered your name when talking to you, ELO also remembered your backstory.

Alex might have recovered from his eighth-grade syndrome, but when he created his game character, he had come up with the most cringy backstory ever.

Chapter 250: King Of Blackmail [Part 3]

Alex's cringy backstory goes something along like this...

< Alex Stratos' Backstory >

In the cold, sacred North, where snow never melted and stars burned brighter, was the Aetherian Empire, the mightiest of all empires.

Its people whispered legends of a hidden prince, born during the eclipse of two suns, marked by the Aetherion Sigil, and destined to reclaim a shattered lineage.

That prince... was him.

His true name: Aetherius Alexian Vademont

And during his birth, the Paragon of Space, Rowand Vademont, had appeared and declared that he would be the godfather of the newlyborn prince.

Fearing for his safety, the Guardian of the North had taken the prince away and hidden him from those who covet his lineage and powers.

He was then given a new name to hide his identity. Until the prophesied time arrived for him to fulfill his destiny, the world shall know him as Alex Stratos.

Even now, Alex wanted to cover his face out of embarrassment whenever he remembered his backstory.

Of course, he wasn't expecting such nonsense to become a reality since that had been the result of his overactive teenage imagination.

However, since it stated there that the Headmaster was his godfather, then calling him his uncle wasn't a big deal, right?

The tense atmosphere gripped the room, which made the Prince frown. He then glanced at the Student Council President, whom he believed was here to mediate this mess.

"Alex, four million is a lot," Theo, who wanted to play peacemaker, said. "You should accept the Prince's offer and make peace with the Lionheart Society."

"No," Alex replied. "The four million academy points is just the start. I want the one who threatened to abuse my club member to be expelled from the academy. The same can be said for the current President of Lionheart Society."

"If my conditions are not met, I will ask the masked man to spread the other evidence he has to the public. Let's see how the academy deals with it then. Also President, you have no idea what this son of a b*tch—errr, Duke has done to other students using his authority."

"Actually, I have an idea. Instead of relying only on my words, how about all of us visit the Lionheart Society Club Room right now and let Professor Gareth investigate? I'm sure the moment you see all his crimes, you will change your mind."

Alex had a good reason why he wanted the President of the Lionheart Society expelled.

It was because that sorry excuse of a human was the one responsible for corrupting Prince Edward and turning the Hero into one of the vilest Villains in the story of ELO.

Chester Blackvale and his Father, the Duke of Blackvale, were one of the many Nobles who supported the Demon Worshipers.

Alex didn't want to see the Prince go down that path, so he would not rest until Chester Blackvale was expelled.

"Don't go too far, Alex Stratos," Chester growled. "If you know what's good for you, you will stop now."

Alex, in his infinite wisdom, stuck his tongue out at the Fourth Year who was trying to intimidate him.

He was very tempted to divulge that Chester and his family were supporters of Demon Worshipers. Unfortunately, it would be very hard to gather evidence about it.

The young man believed it was them who helped insert the spies and other low-ranking members of the criminal organization into the academy before the planned massacre in the Mistral Weave Forest.

However, since he had already killed Willow, one of their Elders, he didn't want to give the Demon Worshipers more reason to hate him.

They were already hostile towards each other, but the severity of the hostility mattered.

Right now, the Demon Worshipers might have already placed a bounty on Alex's head, making him the target of an unknown number of unscrupulous individuals.

That was still fine.

It wasn't bad enough that the higher-ups in the organization would involve themselves. For now, he was just a First Year in Friedan Academy. A very annoying First Year, no doubt, but still a First Year.

If he were to expose the Duke of Blackvale as their supporter, those in the upper echelons of the organization would no longer sit still. They would personally take action against him.

Once those monsters start to hunt him down, Alex believed that he wouldn't be safe even inside the academy.

"It seems that we cannot come to an agreement," Alex said. "Professor Gareth, can we visit the Lionheart Society's Club Room and see what they have been doing?"

"If there is nothing there, I will readily apologize. But if they committed crimes that cannot be forgiven so easily, I ask that you punish them accordingly.

"Also, if the severity of those crimes cannot be tolerated, I ask that their Club be disbanded, effective immediately. Who knows? We might discover something else that would make even the Headmaster take this matter in his own hands."

Everyone in the conference room—the Student Council, Crest Clubs, and even the Professors—were all shaken by his words.

Requesting—no, demanding the dissolution of a Crest Club? That was unprecedented!

Almost all students wished to join the Crest Clubs. Within the academy, the prestige and bragging rights gained just from being a member were almost unmatched.

But now, one of them, which had been around for hundreds of years, was about to face disbandment due to the challenge of a single student.

And to make matters worse, Professor Gareth, one of the Four Guardians of the Academy, nodded his head.

"Alright, let's do that," Professor Gareth replied. Chester's face lost all of its colors.

"W-Wait, Professor," Chester shouted. "This is inappropriate. Only members and those we have personally invited are allowed to enter our club room."

“Don’t forget to add ‘drugged and dragged’ inside of it,” Alex commented, his voice dripping with contempt. “Maybe you define invitations differently from other people.”

Although the young man had known that Nessia would suffer harassment and bullying, he hadn’t expected that the Lionheart Society would go this far. Such a scene never occurred in the game.

However, Alex had changed many things. This would eventually create the so-called butterfly effect.

He couldn’t take any chances, especially when it concerned one of the Main Heroines who would rise up to protect the world.

“Very well. We will pay the compensation of four million academy points,” Chester said through gritted teeth. “I will also step down as the President of the Lionheart Society and take responsibility for the crimes of my members.”

“Don’t make yourself sound like some kind of victim when your closet is full of skeletons.” Alex narrowed his eyes. “Also, it’s not stepping down, but leaving the academy of your own accord. Also, take that lecherous member of yours with you as well... or else.”

Before they had assembled in the Conference Room, Alex and his club members had tried to calm an enraged Renard down. After seeing and hearing Lionheart Society’s plans for Nessia, Renard had almost gone rabid with rage.

Renard had trust issues. This was a fact.

However, there was one person whom he would reluctantly believe in, especially in matters concerning their club, and it was Alex.

Also, Nessia was a commoner like him and suffered the same mistreatment as he did.

This had been more than enough to incense him to the point Alex, Chuck, and Charles struggled to rein him in.

Renard had made Alex promise that no matter what, the person who schemed against their club member must be expelled. If not, he would beat that pervert half dead.

Only when Alex had given his word had Renard calmed down.

It wasn't only Renard who was mad.

All of his Club Members, including the newcomers, like Princess Xenia and Vaan, were furious.

Of course, Alex was angry too, but he was certain that it would not be enough to get the student expelled in the academy.

The only way for that to happen was to have someone with higher authority or rank—like a Duke or a Prince—command him to leave the academy.

This was why Alex used the Lionheart Society as a hostage against its members.

If this Club, which had a rich history spanning centuries, was suddenly disbanded, its former members would surely be demanding answers. The ones responsible would have to face the anger of many powerful alumni.

While they would also target Alex, Chester would still be the one mainly facing the brunt of their anger since he was the current president of the club.

It was his responsibility to keep it afloat during his term.

Prince Edward watched as Chester reluctantly agreed to Alex's demands and promised to leave the academy with the member who had harbored designs on Nessa.

However, he also made Alex promise that he would leave the Lionheart Society and the rest of its members alone if he agreed to his request.

“Very well, I will accept that condition,” Alex said before shifting his gaze to the Merchant Alliance and the other Nobles who bullied his club members. “It’s your turn next.”

His glare made these students flinch. After seeing what had happened to Chester and his club member, they already knew that the President of the Endless Horizon Club wouldn’t take no for an answer.