

Endless 271

Chapter 271: I Am Not Alone [Part 1]

A fearless smile hung on the Barbarian King's lips, enjoying his duel against the Champion of the Dwarves.

While both were Rank 7, anyone who watched the battle could tell from a glance that the Barbarian King was stronger.

Kara and Runa had rallied the Dwarven Chosens and the Dwarven Warriors to run after the ones who snatched their Princess, but they were blocked by the Barbarians and the Minotaurs.

No matter how hard they tried to break past their defenses, all their efforts were put in vain each time.

"Nghh!" Runa staggered after she got bashed by a shield by one of the Barbarians in front of her.

Her specialty lay in swift, precise attacks, but they were unfortunately useless against her opponents, who strategically coordinated with each other instead of fighting individually.

The knocked-down Kara gritted her teeth in frustration and anger as she exerted effort to stand up. Out of anxiety for the princess' safety, she failed to focus on the fight in front of her, leading to her getting hit and thus suffering a moderate injury.

If it weren't for Runa's timely push, she might have already died from getting stabbed in the chest with a sword.

It was then that she noticed Runa stagger, quickly followed up by a Barbarian raising his war axe, ready to hack it down at the lady.

"NO! Runa!" Kara shouted in desperation as the axe descended at her sister.

Runa had no time to evade and could only close her eyes, accepting the inevitable end of fate about to come.

The sound of two weapons clashing against each other reached the young lady's ears before she fell on the ground, thinking she had been hit.

However, the pain she anticipated didn't come, which made her wonder if she had died a quick death.

If not for the fact that the sound of battle still rang in her ears, she would have really thought that she had crossed over to the afterlife.

Upon opening her eyes, she saw Kael standing in front of her, blocking the attacks of multiple Barbarians who were trying to end his life.

"Stand up, Runa!" Kael shouted, breaking the young lady out of her daze.

The shield bash she received earlier stunned her a bit, but didn't injure her too much.

Knowing that she was still alive, she hurriedly stood up and assisted Alex and fending off their attackers.

"When you swing the hammer, don't swing it like a fool who just wants to hurt others."

A voice sounded inside Alex's head.

"In the hands of a blacksmith, a hammer is not only a tool to forge weapons and armor. It is a symbol of creation and destruction. Every strike must carry purpose. Every swing must carry intent."

The voice echoed like a memory from the past, one that had been etched into Alex's soul long before this battlefield.

Alex felt someone temporarily take over his body, but instead of resisting, he yielded control, allowing Kael to teach him the way of using the hammer in battle.

A Barbarian lunged at him with a battle axe raised high.

But this time, the young man didn't simply swing in retaliation.

He stepped into the strike, pivoted his foot, and drove the hammer into the Barbarian's gut. As simple as it might look for the third person, in Alex's eyes, it looked like a smith delivering a decisive stroke upon molten steel.

"Hammer of all Seasons, Seventh Form..." Kael said as if in a daze, raising his hammer above his head before swinging it down, not onto his opponent but onto the ground before him.

"Thunderclap Reverberation!"

The sound of a thunderclap spread in the surroundings, followed by a shockwave that expanded in front of him. All the Barbarians were sent flying, as if swatted away by a broomstick.

Their defensive formations fell, allowing the Dwarves to gain a moment of reprieve.

"Warriors of Ul-Khazir!" Kael shouted, his voice booming across the battlefield like a war drum.

"Do you feel that beneath your feet?! That is the mountain answering our call! Do you hear the thunder in your hearts?! That is the beat of our ancestors who forged these lands with their bare hands!"

He lifted his hammer high, its head crackling with the lingering echoes of his last strike.

"They think they can take away our Princess! They think they can shatter our pride! If that is so, let them come! Let them throw their steel, their beasts, and their might against us! For every stone they turn, they will find a Dwarf standing tall—unbroken and unbent!"

The Dwarves behind him, battered and bloodied, began to rise to their feet, gripping their weapons tighter as a new fire burned within their chests.

Even Kara and Runa suddenly found the strength to continue fighting as a green aura spread around Alex.

“We are not warriors because we seek war. We are warriors because we have something to protect! And today, we show these monsters that they cannot look down upon the Dwarves!”

Alex pointed his hammer forward, blazing in golden flames.

“Fight for honor, and glory!” Alex roared as he charged forward. “FOR THE CLAN!”

“”””FOR THE CLAN!””””

The Dwarves roared as one, their voices merging into a united battle cry that shook the hearts of friend and foe alike.

With renewed vigor, they surged forward, the weight of their despair replaced by the indomitable will of their Dwarven Legacy!

“It’s all in your hands now, Oathkeeper.”

Alex felt himself regaining control of his body, but the flames of determination still burned in his heart.

The young man didn’t wait for the echo of their war cry to fade. He gripped his hammer firmly, leading the charge against the Barbarians, more than ready to fight.

The Dwarves surged forward like a living avalanche.

Short they might be, but their hearts and courage rivaled that of dragons!

Kara and Runa charged alongside Alex, their weapons greedy for the blood of their enemies.

Their previous hesitations and wounds seemed to vanish, replaced by the sheer momentum of Alex's will.

And just like a mighty wave that crashed against the shore, they devoured everything in their path, dyeing the ground with the blood of those who trampled upon their peaceful lives!

Alex, still moving in rhythm with Kael's flow, struck like a forge master with every swing, each impact knocking aside enemies as if sculpting the path forward.

Runa darted alongside him, weaving through the chaos with her daggers, striking weak points and toppling larger foes by slicing through their joints.

Kara followed with brutal precision, her axe cleaving through gaps Runa had opened, exacting vengeance for every wound they had suffered earlier.

The Barbarian warbands, which had seemed so immovable moments ago, began to falter as their formation collapsed under the relentless Dwarven assault.

"Forward!" Kael bellowed. "Kill!"

"Kill!"

A Minotaur holding an Axe roared as it charged in Alex's direction, but the young man didn't back down.

Instead, the hammer in his hand hummed, answering his Master's call.

"Hammer for all Seasons, Eight Form!" Alex raised his hammer, poised to strike.

"Avalanche Crush!"

With a speed far surpassing any act that he had shown before, the young man unleashed a series of rapid and heavy hammer strikes that gained momentum, overwhelming the Minotaur stronger and taller than he was. His precise strikes consecutively landed, ending with a 20-hit Combo!

The last hit was an uppercut using the hammer, blasting the Minotaur back and making it crash over the barbarians behind it.

“Dim Dim!”

A shout came from behind, making Alex turn around.

The Dim Sum God was perched on the head of a Mountain War Goat, covered in mithril armor.

Alex didn’t hesitate and jumped on its back, leaving the little bun to make a path for their charge.

“Kukuku!” Dim Dim chuckled evilly before throwing countless alchemy bombs in front of their path. As it exploded, the shockwaves blew their enemies away.

Clearly, Dim Dim was also very angry because Latifa had been kidnapped by a minotaur.

It still hadn’t had its fill of poking the young lady’s nose! How could it not be furious at the people who played a part in her abduction?

The War Goat was like a hot knife that cut through butter, passing through the Barbarian Ranks while Dim Dim cleared the way.

A few minutes later, they finally saw Latifa, who was still being carried away by a Minotaur.

“Dim Dim!” Alex shouted.

“Dim!”

The little bun understood what its partner wanted, so it jumped, synchronizing with Alex's hammer strike.

Dim Dim landed on the blunt side of the hammer, and a moment later, Alex swung it at full strength, which sent Dim Dim flying at full speed toward the Minotaur.

The little bun then started rolling, its body blazing like a green comet.

"I'm Rolling!"

A second later, the Dim Sum God collided with the Minotaur's head, making the latter cry out in pain before crashing toward the ground.

The little bun spun a little more before landing perfectly on the Minotaur's back, not forgetting to do a dab as if it were a superhero that had perfected its landing.

"Have no fear!" Dim Dim said proudly. "Dim Dim is here!"

Alex couldn't help but smile as his dependable partner continued to protect Latifa from the Barbarians, while the young man was charging in her direction.

Chapter 272: I Am Not Alone [Part 2]

Latifa slowly propped herself up from the ground, then looked at Dim Dim, who had struck his superhero pose atop the fallen Minotaur.

"Thank you, Dim Dim," Latifa said.

"Ahem!" Dim Dim puffed its chest out proudly, but it wasn't able to do that for long because the Barbarians wouldn't allow the princess to escape, no matter what!

"Get the princess!"

“Don’t let her escape!”

“It’s just a dwarf and a weird monster. They are no match against us!”

“Kill!”

Dim Dim jumped up high and threw dozens of alchemy bombs around it and Latifa, causing powerful explosions that blasted and injured the Barbarians in the line of fire.

However, their numerical advantage soon broke through the Dim Sum God’s defensive measures, closing the gap between them and the princess.

Suddenly, a silver flash ran past them as Alex’s War Goat rammed its horns at the enemies in front of it.

Alex also swung his bloodied hammer left and right, smashing anything that stood in his way.

When he finally arrived at the location of the Princess, he immediately extended his hand in order to have her ride behind him.

But just as Latifa was about to reach out to him, the War Goat collapsed and skidded on the ground, making Alex tumble alongside it.

“I underestimated you a bit.”

A cold, arrogant voice reached Alex’s ears, prompting him to glance in the direction where it came from.

The Barbarian King was mounted on top of a Savage Dire Wolf that was at least three-meters tall.

Alex then glanced at the bleating War Goat beside him and saw that its feet had been sliced off from its body.

Not far from them, an axe was buried on the ground. It was the weapon the Barbarian King had thrown to prevent the War Goat from taking his captive away.

Alex hurriedly went to Latifa's side and stood between her and the Barbarian King.

"You are indeed very brave," the Barbarian King admitted. "If only you were a Barbarian, I would have made you my right-hand man. So you are the princess' lover? You two look good together."

The Barbarian King walked slowly toward the dwarves, holding a sword in his hand.

"I planned to kill you earlier, but I changed my mind," the Barbarian King stated. "I'll let you watch as I ravage the princess you love the most."

His words were cold and confident, as if he were certain that no one could stop him.

The Dwarven Champion he had fought earlier was now dead, his severed head crushed by his own hammer.

He deliberately acted more cruelly to lower the morale of the Dwarves, which worked wonders.

However, the Dwarves fighting with Alex didn't fall into despair and fought bravely, charging toward their right flank like warriors who didn't fear death.

As the Barbarian King approached Alex, the young man didn't grow anxious.

In fact, he suddenly felt peace.

Latifa reached out to hold his hand, and whispered in Alex's ears.

“I am here,” Latifa said softly. “We will fight together.”

The one who spoke was not Latifa but the princess who had momentarily taken over his body.

Alex understood what she meant and allowed Kael to take over his body.

In the past, he and Latifa feared that if their synchronization were to reach a hundred percent, they would no longer be themselves and become Princess Yvraine and Kael for the rest of their lives.

Maybe that was what should’ve happened, but Kael and Alex seemed to have come to an understanding.

They were not able to defeat the Barbarian King using their own powers alone.

One was an apprentice blacksmith who had invented the Martial Skill, Hammer for All Seasons, to fight for his beloved.

The other was an Oathkeeper, duty-bound to protect those whom he deemed worth protecting.

One specialized on offense.

One on defense.

Together, they made up what the other lacked.

Unfortunately, they would still fall short of the Barbarian King, who was a Rank 7 Powerhouse.

Even so, they weren’t afraid.

They weren't fighting on their own.

Latifa and Princess Yvraine were fighting as well.

Lastly, they had Dim Dim with them.

"Kael..."

"Princess..."

The two gazed at each other with affection.

The young man gave her hand a light squeeze, as if telling her that this time, it would be different.

Princess Yvraine nodded and smiled at him, trusting her protector, who was also her childhood friend and secret lover.

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< Current Synchronization Rate: 95% >

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The two dwarves pressed their foreheads together, and a green crystal emerged from Princess Yvraine's chest.

It hovered between them, as if fulfilling a promise that they had failed to in the past.

When the Barbarian King saw this, he no longer stood still and swung his weapon to kill Alex.

An aura blade flew towards the young man, but a green barrier blocked the attack.

“Bleh!” Dim Dim stuck out its tongue and made faces at the Barbarian King.

It had summoned a barrier to protect Alex and Latifa, allowing them to fulfill the prophecy that was denied during their time.

The princess transformed into a green mist and merged with the green jewel.

The jewel then merged with Kael’s forehead, giving him the power of the Verdant Throne.

A powerful aura expanded from Alex’s body, sending rocks and dirt flying in every direction.

An illusory image of Princess Yvraine appeared behind his back like an Over Soul, ready to fight alongside her beloved.

Latifa’s gaze was blank because the moment she merged with Alex, she also saw a part of his memories.

Both Kael’s and Alex’s memories.

But soon, clarity appeared in her eyes as Princess Yvraine took over, so she could fight side by side with her beloved.

“Princess...”

“Un.”

Alex and Latifa took a step back, allowing their counterparts to take the stage.

They were no longer afraid of being taken over since they knew that this was the right thing to do.

Within their Sea of Consciousness, the two watched the happenings through the eyes of Kael and the Princess while holding each other's hands.

They would be lying if they said that they weren't feeling anxious, so they supported each other by holding hands.

"Very well." The Barbarian King narrowed his eyes. "Show me the power that would allow someone to rule the continent!"

The Barbarian then raised his sword. As red flames covered the blade, his red aura expanded, as if competing with the green aura coming out from the young man's body.

Dim Dim had already jumped away, understanding that it shouldn't interfere with this battle.

Everguard, which was filled with cracks a while ago, glowed golden and repaired itself in a heartbeat.

The hammer in Kael's hand also blazed in golden flames, determined to fight one last time with its Master.

The two combatants stared at each other for nearly half a minute before both of them took a step forward.

In the blink of an eye, they clashed with each other, creating a thundering explosion that resulted in a crater hundreds of meters wide.

A battle between super humans was about to commence, and The World gazed upon this battle as if it sensed something that caught its interest.

Chapter 273: I Am A Fan Of Happy Endings [Part 1]

"Yvraine."

“Kael.”

“This time, it will be different,” Kael declared as he tightened his grip around his hammer.

“Yes.” Yvraine smiled, gathering the power of the Verdant Throne to assist her beloved in battle.

The young man’s eyes locked onto the Barbarian King, who was also sizing him up from a distance.

A moment later, they simultaneously took a single step and vanished from where they stood.

As the two clashed against each other, the sound of a thunderclap spread on the battlefield, and a crater formed beneath their feet. Dirt and gravel danced in the air, blasted by their collision.

The force from their exchange made the Barbarian King take three steps back, negligible compared to Kael, who skidded a few meters away.

That single exchange showed the gap between their strength, with the Barbarian King in the lead.

However, Kael paid no care, wielding his hammer with great accuracy, strength, and precision.

The sound of two weapons clashing dwarfed the noise of everyone on the battlefield.

Some of them even stopped fighting completely, shifting their attention toward Kael’s battle against the Barbarian King.

They all knew—the victor of the battle would decide the outcome of the war.

Kael and the Barbarian King continuously exchanged blows, the first minute soon marked by a grunt from Kael, the first one to shed blood. The enemy’s blade had drawn a crimson line from the young man’s collarbone to his waist.

Fortunately, the wound was shallow, for he had backed away in time.

But blood still dyed the young man's torn clothes, and to the eyes of many, his injury didn't look simple.

"Kael!" Princess Yvraine clasped her hands together as the power of regeneration healed her lover's injury in two seconds.

"I see. So extreme regeneration, huh?" the Barbarian King commented. "How about we test just how strong that regeneration is!"

The Barbarian King's aura exploded as he once again charged in the direction of the young man, who faced him fearlessly.

Once more, their blades collided again and again, sending sparks flying in every direction.

The longer their battle, the more obvious their difference.

With the buff from the Verdant Throne and support from Princess Yvraine, he temporarily had the strength of a Rank 7 Rune Smith.

But he wasn't a true Rank 7 after all, while his opponent had been a Rank 7 for many years.

The Barbarian King had many battle experiences that matched his rank, steadily accumulated during his journey to become the Barbarian King. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that he had reached the pinnacle after many life and death battles, learning the art of war the hard way.

This was something an apprentice blacksmith had never learned in his entire life.

Kael had his share of killing monsters, but he never fought others to death before this war started.

A battle-hardened opponent, like the Barbarian King before him, naturally fought differently from monsters, which put him in a big disadvantage.

“Still too green!” the Barbarian King roared as he tricked the young man with a feint, fooling Kael into thinking that he was about to hack the latter’s right side.

However, the Barbarian King stopped his sword midway before making a quick turn, then he swung his sword upward, earning a pained groan from Kael, whose arm wielding Everguard had just been severed from his body.

He wasn’t used to wielding a shield, so he wasn’t able to block properly.

At that moment, a green aura surged from Kael’s severed arm and connected with the arm that did not let go of Everguard.

The aura then pulled the arm back to his body, merging it in place and healing it completely.

“Hah! Good!” the Barbarian King laughed. “So it can do that as well!”

The Barbarian King was clearly using this opportunity to observe the power of the Verdant Throne, which was currently being shared between the Princess and the young man he was fighting.

“I wonder, will it still work if I cut your head off your body?” the Barbarian King sneered as he held his blade firmly for another strike.

Kael, who now knew what the King was trying to do, hurriedly used the shield to block the slash that sent him skidding several meters away.

But the King had no plans to stop, attempting to hack the young man repeatedly. The latter desperately tried to shield himself, occasionally swinging the hammer to deflect the Barbarian King’s attacks.

'No, it shouldn't be like this!' Kael thought as he gritted his teeth in desperation. 'If this continues, the past will repeat itself!'

Things had turned out better compared to how he had fought the Barbarian King in the past.

He thought that this time it would be different, and he and the princess would finally be free from their curse.

But to his surprise, the Barbarian King was far stronger than he thought, incrementing his anxiety with every blow they trade.

With a grunt of pain, Kael was sent flying by the Barbarian King's kick, aimed at the side of his body.

The young man crashed on the ground and rolled several times before coughing a mouthful of blood.

A green aura enveloped his body, allowing him to recover from his injuries.

But he and the princess knew that if nothing changed, their defeat would be set in stone.

"Kael, you suck at using the shield."

Alex's voice broke Kael from his daze.

His body then slowly stood up as if the young man, who had lent him his body was helping him to stand up.

"You and Princess Yvraine cannot beat him," Alex said with certainty.

"I know," Kael replied, gripping his hammer so tightly that it seemed to have merged with his hand. "But there is nothing I can do but fight!"

“That’s right,” Alex answered. “So fight and leave the defending to me.”

Princess Yvraine, who could hear the conversation between the two, glanced at her side after she felt Latifa hug her from behind.

“It’s fine, Princess,” Latifa said. “Things will be different this time. Alex and I will help you.”

Latifa had also transformed into a spirit, similar to an Oversoul, and hovered on the right side of the body.

“Continue to guard and heal Kael,” Latifa stated. “I will handle his movement, and Alex will handle his defense. Kael only needs to attack. He doesn’t have to worry about anything else.”

“That’s right,” Alex commented. “With a Healer, Buffer, Defender, and Attacker working together, defeating this Boss will be easier.”

Kael suddenly felt his body become much lighter than before, and with it, the anxiety he felt slowly faded, making him feel like it was all an illusion.

“Latifa, have I told you before that I am a fan of happy endings?” Alex asked as he lightly squeezed the young lady’s hand from inside their sea of consciousness.

“No,” Latifa replied, feeling a sense of security as the young man held her hand. “But I also like happy endings.”

“Then, let’s make sure that we give this story a happy end, okay?”

“Okay.”

A powerful aura exploded from Kael’s body as the power of the Verdant Princess, the Rune Smith, the Celestial Walker, and the Oathkeeper merged into one.

“Go!” Alex urged, and with that, Kael charged forward with only one goal.

Attack.

Attack!

ATTACK!

Chapter 274: I Am A Fan Of Happy Endings [Part 2]

Seeing Kael charge at him a second time, the wide grin on the Barbarian King’s face grew bigger. The more he saw the Verdant Throne’s power, the greater his interest in possessing it grew.

According to legend, the one who managed to wield its power would become near-immortal, break the limits of mortality, and transcend to a higher form of existence!

‘I must have it!’ The Barbarian King’s eyes locked on the green gem embedded on Kael’s forehead. ‘I’ll cut off that head and make it mine!’

With a sinister grin on his face, he once again clashed with the young man, whom he had just been toying with since their fight began.

Truth be told, Kael’s fighting ability was brutally honest. In other words, reading his moves was no different from reading an open book.

Obviously, the young man had very limited experience in killing people, which the Barbarian King had plenty of.

But this time, things were different.

Kael didn’t hesitate.

He had shed all forms of defense and simply focused on attacking.

He didn't flinch.

He didn't defend.

He simply swung.

The hammer struck the Barbarian King's sword with a deafening clang that reverberated across the battlefield.

However, unlike before, the impact forced the Barbarian King's stance to buckle ever so slightly.

The King's eyes narrowed. "That's new."

Kael's body moved with newfound sharpness.

Latifa's coordination made every step precise and every pivot fluid.

His shield, once a dead weight, now acted on its own. Alex was the one parrying the incoming sword strikes, perfectly timing his deflection to avoid disrupting Kael's rhythm.

Yvraine's blessings poured through his body, empowering her beloved with her love and dedication.

The coordination of four consciousness working as one made a big difference, their tacit understanding constantly growing the more they fought as one.

The Barbarian King's relentless slashes met with deflections that turned his momentum against him.

Each time he raised his sword, Kael's hammer struck back, heavy and brutal, chipping away at the King's guard.

'He's still a greenhorn,' The Barbarian King thought, stepping back, "So why am I being pushed back?'

He could easily read Kael's attack patterns, but his footwork would suddenly become unpredictable at the last moment, making his strikes change their pattern at the last moment.

Latifa was a Celestial Walker.

Her fighting style was different from others.

However, Alex knew how deadly she was.

At full strength with five tails, Latifa could split her consciousness into five forms.

It was similar to having a full raiding team with a magician, a swordsman, a defender, a supporter, and another attacker working seamlessly together.

She was the one merging everyone's wills together to act as a single entity, and also the one responsible for Kael's uncanny movement patterns, making his predictable attacks... suddenly become unpredictable!

The Barbarian King clicked his tongue in annoyance.

His aura surged once more, a crimson vortex spiraling around him as he reinforced his stance. Due to his overwhelming strength, those who were too close were affected and found themselves pushed back by intangible pressure.

Each swing of his sword could cleave through boulders like paper, but no matter how ferocious his strikes, Everguard deflected and blocked them, negating a lot of the force behind them.

Alex was an expert in Dungeon Raids and had been reading the Barbarian King's attack patterns and mannerisms.

His interventions were perfectly timed, turning lethal blows into harmless glancing strikes.

Latifa's delicate control of Kael's footing made his movements fluid, adjusting in micro-seconds to exploit the smallest openings.

Yvraine's continuous blessings mended every grazing wound caused by the Barbarian King's sharp aura before it could become a weakness.

For the first time in the battle, the Barbarian King's smile faltered.

He was now fighting seriously against an opponent whom he had reluctantly recognized as his equal!

The dance of death continued as gusts of wind expanded outward with each clash.

This time, it wasn't Kael being pushed back.

The Barbarian King slowly lost ground as Kael's attack caught momentum.

Each blow seemed to connect with the other, each step a continuation of the last.

"Hammer for all Seasons...Eighth Form!" Kael roared.

"Avalanche Crush!"

A series of high-speed, heavy blows forced the Barbarian King to take a few steps back as he used his sword to block against them.

“Die, dwarf!” The Barbarian King took his stand and unleashed a full-powered overhead strike, wanting to cut the dwarf and his shield in half.

But Kael didn’t falter and faced it head-on.

“Hammer for all Seasons... Sixth Form!” Kael growled as he prepared to unleash a counter-attack, leaving his defense to Alex.

Everguard clashed with the Barbarian’s attack, making the ground under the young man’s feet shatter as the shield and his body absorbed the impact of the deadly strike.

After a successful block, Kael roared as he used the absorbed impact to launch a crushing hammerstrike at his foe!

“Stoneheart Bastion!”

A grunt escaped the Barbarian King’s lips as Kael landed his very first attack on his opponent’s body.

Not wanting to waste this opportunity, he once again stomped his foot on the ground follow-up attack.

He understood that he might not get this opportunity ever again, so he pushed his body to the limit as he prepared his final blow.

< Current Synchronization Rate: 98% >

He would need everything he had to unleash the most powerful attack of the Hammer of all Seasons, leaving no room for any mistake.

“Hammer for all Season’s Ultimate Form!”

The golden flames on his hammer burned brighter, and the green aura surrounding his body turned golden as well.

With every bit of strength in his body, Kael swung his hammer, putting everything on the line.

The Barbarian King hurriedly used his sword to block the attack, using every bit of his aura in order to minimize the damage he would take from this devastating attack.

However, as he took a step back in order to gain a proper foothold to parry the attack, he stepped on something hard and round, breaking his stance completely!

Dim Dim, who was watching the battle a while ago, had tossed a steel ball on the Barbarian King's foot with perfect accuracy at the critical moment.

The loss of balance had left the Barbarian King's body wide open, which Kael didn't miss!

"Fortress Breaaaaaaaaaaaaaker!"

A second later, a powerful explosion occurred as golden flames rose to the sky, transforming into a dragon, whose roar could be heard from miles on end.

The powerful Barbarian King's body was burned to a crisp and crashed on the ground, breaking into countless pieces.

The Barbarians who saw everything from start to finish looked at the outcome of the battle with wide eyes.

They couldn't believe what they were seeing, but when they confirmed that the Barbarian King was no more, all of them ran away in panic.

The Minotaurs also lost the will to fight and retreated in haste.

As for the Dwarves, they raised their weapons and cheered!

“We won!”

“Long live the princess!”

“Long live Kael!”

“Long Live the Verdant Throne!”

Alex and Latifa finally regained control of their bodies, prompting the young lady to materialize once more.

However, a smile could be seen on her face as she hugged Alex tightly.

“We won!” Latifa shouted. “Alex, we won!”

“Yes, we did,” Alex replied as he patted the young lady’s back.

Latifa then pulled back and gazed at Alex’s face.

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< Synchronization Rate increased by 1% >

< Current Synchronization Rate: 99% >

Note: What are you waiting for, buddy? It’s now or never!

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Alex felt himself being drawn to Latifa's lips, and the latter was being drawn to his as well.

Both of them felt that there was nothing wrong with what they were about to do, especially under the influence of synchronization.

Perhaps, Kael and Princess Yvraine wished to seal this moment with a kiss, which would have been the perfect ending.

But just as Alex and Latifa were about to kiss, Alex used all of his willpower to raise his hand and press it over the young lady's lips, which in turn made him kiss the back of his own fingers.

The young man wished for nothing more than to kiss one of his Queens, but he didn't want it to happen under the influence of their synchronization.

He refused to kiss her in this manner!

They had their eyes closed the whole time, which was very normal when two people kissed each other.

So when Latifa opened her eyes and discovered that her lips were against Alex's fingers, she felt both relief and disappointment at the same time.

Relief and even gratitude because Alex didn't take advantage of their current situation to give her a kiss.

And yet, disappointed because she felt an ache in her chest for reasons that she was starting to discover on her own.

But just as the young man was about to say something, he felt a presence not far from them, which made him look in that direction.

There, he saw two dwarves he had never met until now. And yet, he felt like he had known them for years.

It was none other than the real Kael and Princess Yvraine, hugging each other with tears streaming down the sides of their faces.

The two then pressed their lips together, sharing a kiss that had transcended space and time.

Their kiss didn't last for more than a few seconds. However, Alex and Latifa felt that this was the happy ending they had envisioned for the two of them.

"Thank you," Kael said as he turned to face Alex and Latifa. "We are finally free."

"If there is an opportunity to meet in the future, I will do my best to repay this debt," Princess Yvraine said before bowing toward the two teenagers.

They had set her and her beloved free from the never-ending struggle they had experienced for the past hundreds of years.

"Also, Latifa, there's nothing wrong with dreaming," Princess Yvraine said softly. "But no matter how beautiful the dream is, everyone will have to wake up to reality at some point in time.

"Even if reality is ugly, even if it is painful—not all of it is bad. After all, no one can live alone in this world."

The Princess gave the young lady a wink before leaning her head on Kael's shoulder with a sweet smile on her face.

"Alex, um, during the merging earlier, I saw your memories," Kael scratched the back of his head. "I'm sure Latifa also saw some of your memories, just like how you saw hers. I won't say much, but... you, sir, should be careful. Especially when it comes to ladies."

“If I don’t go to hell, who will?” Alex answered, fully knowing what the young dwarf was implying. “But I’m sure that even though this journey is full of thorns, I will not regret anything as long as I live my life to the fullest.”

Kael nodded. “I’m sure you will. After all, this world holds endless possibilities. May ‘The World’ watch over you and your journey. Goodbye. If destiny permits it, we shall meet again.”

The two dwarves once again hugged each other and turned into particles of light.

Their story had finally come to an end, and Alex and Latifa both wished that wherever the two of them would go, they would be together in the next continuation of their story.

Dim Dim watched this scene from a distance and also pressed its hands together in prayer.

Although it was a God, it had no control over the cycle of reincarnation.

So, it prayed and hoped that Kael and Princess Yvraine would have the happy ending they deserved in their next life.

As Alex looked at the sky, he heard a notification sound inside his head, followed by a blue window screen in front of him.

— — —

[You Have Completed An Arcana Quest!]

[Quest Name: The War-Forged Past Completed!]

— First part of 3 Chain Quests Complete!

— — —

Alex smiled faintly but didn't bother to read the rest since he wasn't in the mood for it.

Latifa was still holding his hand, and for him, it was more important than the rewards he could ever obtain from clearing the Trial of Morgim.

Chapter 275: It's Time To Go Back

As the Trial of Morgim came to an end, the world around them gently faded.

"Hey, do you think they finally got their happy ending?" Latifa asked.

"Yes," Alex replied without hesitation. "I'm sure of it."

A faint smile appeared on Latifa's face, believing the same thing.

Just then, a light cough reached their ears, prompting the two to look in front of them.

"Sooo~ how long do you guys plan to hold hands?" Lumi asked, her arms crossed over her chest.

Alex and Latifa then gazed at their interlocked fingers for a few seconds, then both loosened their grips.

Alex had activated his self-control to the maximum, but letting go voluntarily was just beyond his capability, so Latifa had been the one to pull out first... reluctantly.

As Dim Dim landed on top of Alex's head, it giggled out of amusement at the current situation.

Finding the air awkward, Alex decided to change the subject. He glanced at Lotte and Lumi, who were nowhere to be found during the trial.

"Were you two not in the trial?" Alex inquired.

Lotte and Lumi glanced at each other before shifting their gaze back at the young man.

“We were there,” Lotte replied. “I was Kara.”

“And I was Runa,” Lumi stated. “Both of us synchronized with Princess Yvraine’s handmaidens at 100% from the start, so all we could do was watch the events unfold.”

Latifa finally understood why, no matter how much she called out, she was unable to summon or talk to her Alters inside the trial.

“Well then, where are we now?” Lumi asked as she looked around. “Is this still part of the trial?”

Alex shook his head. “No. This is the place you end up after clearing the trial.”

He then glanced at the eight pillars in the distance. The Rune of Morgim shone brightly, confirming that the trial had ended.

Suddenly, another one of the pillars lit up, followed by a flash of light a few meters away from where Alex stood.

A young lady—err, boy, whom everyone knew, materialized after the light faded.

Alex saw the pretty boy facing him, so he was about to call for him. But upon noticing the tears streaming down Vaan’s face, Alex changed his words.

“Are you alright?” Alex asked in concern.

While he didn’t know what kind of trial Vaan faced after separating from them, the pretty boy looked very vulnerable right now, so he made it a priority to comfort the latter.

Vaan soon realized that his trial was over when he saw his club president approach, worry etched in his face.

The teenage boy opened his mouth to speak, but then closed it once again as if he had lost the ability to talk.

He simply took a step forward and rested his head on Alex's chest.

"Let me stay like this for a while," Vaan said softly.

His body shuddered from time to time, and Alex could feel the wetness spread on his chest.

"Alright," Alex replied as he gave Vaan a hug and patted his back. "Let it all out until you feel better."

Even Dim Dim slid down from Alex's head and landed on Vaan's head, giving him a pat as if telling him that everything was going to be fine.

Latifa, who was observing this scene, motioned for her two Alters to move closer.

"Hey, I know that I've been sleeping most of the time, but..." Latifa hesitated. "Is Vaan a girl or a boy?"

"Alex said he is a boy," Lotte replied.

"Is he?" Lumi blinked. "I can't tell if he is. Should I peek at him when he is taking a bath to confirm?"

Latifa was tempted to say yes, but Lumi's suggestion sounded out of bounds, and she didn't want to encourage such actions.

"Never mind." Latifa shook her head. "If Alex says he is a boy, then he is a boy."

Another pillar lit up, and a moment later, Lavinia and Mary appeared at the same time.

When Lavinia saw Alex hugging Vaan, with the latter crying in his arms, she didn't feel anything wrong with it.

In fact, she even thought that Vaan might still be suffering from the synchronization rate that he had experienced in his trial, just like her and Mary.

Truth be told, her eyes were also moist, but as a warrior, she refused to shed tears in public.

Even Mary couldn't help but wipe her eye with a handkerchief. The events they experienced were just so moving, it was impossible not to feel anything after going through them firsthand.

"Were you guys the first to finish?" Lavinia asked Latifa, who was currently discussing with Lotte and Lumi.

"Yes," Latifa replied. "Vaan finished a minute before you and Mary appeared. Did you both clear your trials?"

Lavinia nodded. "Yes. And a blue projection popped up in front of us, listing the rewards we acquired after finishing our trial."

Latifa didn't ask what kind of reward her club member had received, thinking that doing so would be inappropriate.

She had also gained a reward she never expected to receive.

— — —

[You Have Completed An Arcana Quest!]

[Quest Name: The War-Forged Past Completed!]

— First part of 3 Chain Quests Complete!

Rewards: You have acquired the first half of the Verdant Throne.

< Verdant Throne >

— Increases your regeneration rate by 300%

— You gained the ability to regenerate any severed part of your body, excluding the head.

— Passively promotes a healthy immune system and overall health.

— You learned the skill Verdant Heal [Ex]

— You are now able to call forth the power of nature, summoning vines to bind your enemies and aid you in battle.

< Verdant Heal [EX] >

— Gives you the power to heal almost any kind of injury, except for regenerating the body parts of others.

— This skill will get an upgrade once the second half of the Verdant Throne merges with your ability, allowing you to heal even destroyed limbs.

— — —

The Morgim Trial hadn't been easy to clear, but she frankly didn't expect the reward to be so great. After all, it was the power of the Verdant Throne.

She didn't even need to be a genius to guess who had the second half of the Verdant Throne.

'He must have it as well,' Latifa thought as she gazed at Alex, who was still patting Vaan's back to help him calm down.

Half an hour later, the members of Endless Horizon appeared one by one.

The last to finish their quest was Chuck, who was bawling his eyes out when he materialized in front of them.

But no one laughed or made fun of him because they understood what he had been through.

Their trials and experiences might be different, but the format of their trials was surely the same. Even if their heart was made of ice, it was impossible not to feel moved.

Once all eight pillars lit up, they all unleashed a beam of light that merged, forming a portal at the center of the room.

"Let's go, guys," Alex said. "It's time to go back."

He was the first to enter the portal, and when he appeared on the other side, he was greeted by a view he had never seen even in the game.

The other members of Endless Horizon were also mesmerized by the scene that welcomed them after crossing the portal.

A sea of clouds lay under them, and over the horizon, the sun peeked from the sea and spread its first rays of light into the world.

It was the start of a brand new day. Viewing it from their vantage made them all feel like the sun had personally come to greet them and tell them they had done a great job.

While everyone was gazing at this scene, Alex spoke, catching everyone's attention.

"As you may already know, the trial earlier is just the first part of a Chain Quest," Alex said. "After finishing two more quests, we will gain access to one of the most mysterious places on the continent. I'm sure you guys already know where to go next, right?"

Everyone nodded because it was true.

They already had an idea about where to go next—a trip that would take them to the West, where the ancient kingdom of the Elves, Faelarun, stood proudly.

"We can't go there right now. At this time of the year, the Elves close their borders in preparation for their World Tree Festival," Alex stated. "Let's go there after our midterm exams end."

Alex then looked at the two Fourth Years and smiled faintly.

"Also, Mr. Mark and Mr. Spencer, I would like to formally invite the two of you to Endless Horizon," Alex said. "I hope you accept my invitation."

"If we don't join, will you blackmail us?" Mark asked.

"No," Alex replied. "I won't force you guys if you don't want to join."

Spencer scratched the back of his head before looking at his friend.

The two nodded to each other before giving their answer.

“Well, as long as you promise that we will be able to graduate, then I don’t mind joining your club.” Mark grinned.

“Same here.” Spencer sighed. “We’re already in our last year, so we don’t want any trouble. Also, being part of the Blackmail King’s Club will ensure that no one will dare to mess with us.”

Alex smirked. Looks like the title of Blackmail King would not go away, no matter how hard he tried.

He preferred to be the Singing King, but since no one wanted to call him that, he had no choice but to just go with the flow.

With renewed determination, the members of Endless Horizon trekked down the mountain, only to be told by Princess Xenia’s retainers that they had been missing for a week, which took everyone by surprise.

Chapter 276: New Classmates

For Alex and Latifa, the Trial of Morgim only lasted for a day.

At least, that was what happened.

By the looks of it, time moved differently inside the trials.

According to Vaan, he had spent a week in his own trial, so he wasn’t too surprised when he heard they’d been missing for a week in the outside world.

The number of days everyone spent on their trials varied. For Lavinia and Mary, it was four days. Chuck and Charles, five days. For Princess Xenia and Nessia, it was three days.

Mark and Spencer’s trial took the longest—ten days.

Even so, the two looked very satisfied which meant that they had gotten something worth their effort, and trouble.

As for Renard... well, he was unwilling to tell anyone how long his trial took.

He was not really sociable, but he was starting to mellow up a bit to his club members. Unfortunately, this was only true for the girls, and not the guys in their club.

Alex and the rest were already used to his attitude, so no one pressed for answers.

When they arrived at the academy, it was already Saturday evening.

"I think it will be a good idea to update our homeroom teachers. Let's just tell them we accidentally discovered a ruin while hiking on the Heracle Mountains," Nessia said. "The last thing we want to get are demerits for being absent from our classes."

Alex agreed with this suggestion. Wasting no time, he invited Chuck and Charles to look for their homeroom professor, so they could justify their absence for the previous week.

"I see, so that's what happened." Professor Arabella nodded in understanding. "I'm just glad all of you returned safely. Otherwise, the Royal Family would have sent a few rescue teams to look for Princess Xenia, since she disappeared with all of you."

The Professor sighed before writing a note in her small notebook.

"You three can go back," Professor Arabella said after she finished writing. "Just make sure you'll be there on Monday, so you can also meet and greet your new classmates."

"New Classmates?" Alex blinked.

"Yes." Professor Arabella nodded in confirmation. "New classmates."

And just like that, the weekend came and went. Alex and the rest of his club members used their leftover free time to rest, energy drained from their adventure on the Heracle Mountain.

“Professor Arabella said we have new classmates,” Chuck commented. “Did they perhaps transfer to our room because they saw how handsome and suave I was during the Battle Royale?”

“Right...” Alex didn’t want to pop Chuck’s delusion, so he decided to agree with him.

Alex and the rest of his Club Members had received a lot of points during that event, and if they wished to, they could even go to other classes as well.

In fact, since they were part of the top survivors, they could even go to Class A if they wanted, joining the true elites of the academy.

Latifa even asked Alex to go to Class B with her, so they could have classes together.

Alex initially considered the idea. But after visiting the farm with Dim Dim and seeing Fran look at him with worry after not seeing him for a week, he changed his mind.

The cute dwarf’s puppy eyes as she looked at Alex hit his heart with an arrow, making him realize that he didn’t have the heart to transfer to another class and leave her behind.

Also, Dim Dim was now best buddies with the farm animals, especially the Doom Cow, Daisy, whom the Dim Sum God accompanied during its patrol of the academy.

Since Alex didn’t plan to transfer, Chuck canceled his plans to transfer as well.

The same with Charles, who wished to be with his friends.

A few minutes later, Alex and the rest of his classmates looked at their homeroom teacher, Professor Arabella, as she faced them all with a smile.

“Today, new friends are joining us here in Class C,” Professor Arabella declared. “I know some of you are very excited to meet them, so without further delay, please welcome your new classmates!”

As if waiting for that moment, the door of the classroom opened, and a young lady entered.

Her long black hair was tied in a ponytail, and her purple eyes captured everyone's attention.

However, the moment her gaze landed on Alex, she immediately gave the latter a wink and a flying kiss, which made the single guys in class look at their handsome classmate with bloodshot eyes.

The corner of Alex's lips twitched. It was very obvious that Vaan was messing with him.

However, every other guy, except for his club members, as well as the majority of the girls, thought that the two were flirting in public!

"My name is Vaan Damne," Vaan said with a sweet smile on his face. "My favorite food is cake! And my favorite person is Alex Stratos. Everyone, I hope we can have a good year together!"

His cheerful and lively personality brightened up the atmosphere of the room because no one was able to resist such a cute girl... unfortunately, most of them didn't know the truth.

After Vaan made his introduction, another student entered the room.

Her cat ears and cat tail immediately caught everyone's attention.

"Lavinia Hartwell," Lavinia introduced herself. "I hope we all get along."

Since Alex didn't plan on transferring to her class, she decided to transfer to his class instead!

Seeing the Catkin in Class C made the single guys give each other a thumbs up. They were so lucky! Another beautiful girl had joined their class.

But it didn't end there.

A fox lady with three tails also entered the room and bowed her head toward the class.

“Latifa Everglen,” Latifa said. “My hobby is to sleep, so please, don’t get offended if I don’t reply to you if you talk to me. I’m probably sleeping.”

Her gaze briefly stayed in Alex’s direction for a few seconds before she scanned the faces of her other classmates.

“No way, Latifa too?” Chuck blinked. “Hahaha! Three of our club members are here. Whose next? Nessi—huuk!”

The teenage boy almost choked on his saliva when the young lady wearing glasses entered their classroom.

Nessia glanced in Chuck’s direction before fixing her glasses using her middle finger.

“Nessia Varr,” Nessia introduced herself. “I was in Class B with Lavinia. I decided to also transfer so I can be surrounded by familiar people. I hope we all have a good year together.”

Alex rubbed his chin. As far as he knew, Nessia was a very competitive person.

If she were to change classes, she would easily be at home with Class A, which was filled with elite students like Princess Xenia.

So, he was surprised to see her here. Instead of getting an upgrade, Nessia chose to downgrade instead, making him wonder what prompted her to move to their class.

“And one more person is joining our class today,” Professor Arabella said.

Chuck, seated beside Alex, clasped his hands together and started chanting.

“Please not Renard!”

“Please not Renard!”

“Please not Renard!”

“Please not Renard!”

Alex and Charles glanced at each other and also clasped their hands in prayer.

“Please not Renard.”

“Please not Renard.”

Class C was a relatively peaceful class, so having Renard around might destroy their peaceful days at the academy.

The sound of footsteps reached their ears as a student entered the classroom.

Her sun-kissed skin gleamed like warm bronze, and her eyes, which had the color of molten topaz, made Chuck take a deep breath when his eyes landed on her face.

“Evangeline Feylune,” Evangeline said firmly, making everyone in the room focus on her direction.

The young lady’s gaze locked on Alex, and for a brief moment, the young man felt a tinge of killing intent from her.

“I look forward to spending time with everyone here.”

After saying those words, she lined up with Vaan, Lavinia, Latifa, and Nessia, who were standing behind her.

“Everyone, let’s give them a round of applause!” Professor Arabella said, clapping her hands.

The rest of Class C followed, except for Alex, who felt a chill as four ladies... with one of them being a boy, stared straight in his direction, as if telling him to clap his hands or else.

Feeling a great threat to his chastity, the young man clapped vigorously as if to dispel the feeling of being devoured by lionesses who had targeted their prey from the herd.

Chapter 277: A Dream Within A Dream [Part 1]

“Awww, they look good together.”

“I know, right?”

“The handsome Prince who saved the princess—hah... I’m so jealous.”

“They’re a match made in heaven.”

“Vaan is so bold. She actually dares to lean her head on Alex’s shoulder in class.”

“Look at Alex! He’s just indulging her. Look at that affectionate gaze.”

“A-Are you sure it’s a gentle gaze? For me, it looks like a helpless one.”

“It doesn’t matter if it’s gentle or helpless. Either way, they look so good together!”

“”Right!””

The girls giggled as they chatted among themselves, occasionally sneaking glances at Alex and Vaan, who were seated right beside each other.

Just like what the ladies had said, Vaan's head was currently resting on Alex's shoulder, with her—errr, his eyes closed and a sweet smile.

Nessia smiled before whispering something in Lavinia's ear. "You need to try a little harder, or Vaan is going to steal him."

"B-But Vaan is a guy, right?" Lavinia replied.

"Are you sure?" Nessia fixed her glasses. "Do you have any proof?"

"Alex said Vaan is a guy, and I trust Alex," Lavinia insisted.

Nessia smiled faintly and decided to let the matter slide before glancing at Latifa, who was pretending to be asleep, but was secretly eyeing Alex and Vaan from her seat.

'If I remember correctly, both of them went to the same trial,' Nessia mused. 'This looks fun.'

The young lady then shifted her gaze toward the next transfer student who had come with them to Class C.

Evangeline Feylune.

She was one of the last survivors during their Battle Royale, but Nessia didn't know anything about her.

But during her introduction, Nessia vaguely sensed some sort of hostility coming from her, which was aimed at Alex.

'Was that just my imagination?' Nessia thought.

The Professor had yet to arrive, so she casually looked around and memorized the faces of her new classmates.

Several hours later...

Alex did some light stretches after the final class of the day ended.

Fortunately, they hadn't missed anything important while they were clearing the trials in the Heracle Mountains.

The Professors even expressed concern and told them to be more careful when going out on expeditions.

Of course, to keep things fair, they still received a penalty for their week-long absence. They were banned from traveling long distances for a month.

Alex showed no protest since he didn't plan to invite the rest to a trip anytime soon.

"Alex, what do you plan to do now?" Vaan asked. "Are we going to have a meeting in the club room today?"

"I don't have anything planned," Alex replied. "But I plan to take a nap in the club room."

There was an unoccupied floor beneath their clubrooms, so Alex turned them into various rooms—nap rooms, laboratories, and study areas.

Spending some time there wouldn't be too bad.

"A nap..." Vaan smirked before nodding his head in understanding. "Sounds like a good idea."

After saying those words, the pretty boy then left the class with Chuck, who seemed to need his help for something.

“Dim Dim!” Dim Dim lightly patted Alex’s head.

“Okay, you can go,” Alex replied. “Just make sure to be back before curfew.”

“Dim!” Dim Dim saluted before jumping towards the window.

It wanted to visit the farm to play with the animals there and make up for the days they weren’t together.

Since his other club members also planned to do other things, Alex headed to the clock tower on his own.

To his surprise, Latifa was already there, sleeping on her bed as usual.

Lotte stood guard by her side and gave Alex a nod of greeting.

Alex returned the greeting before lying down on the couch to sleep.

He could have gone to the nap room, but taking a nap in the clubroom wasn’t a bad decision either.

It took Alex only a minute to fall asleep after his head rested on his pillow.

Lotte watched the young man sleep before looking at Latifa, who opened her eyes to look at Alex.

“Hey, I know what you’re thinking,” Lotte said. “Don’t do it.”

As to what Lotte was referring to, Latifa pretended that she didn’t hear it and continued to sleep.

— — —

Poke

“Ngh...”

Poke *Poke*

“Dim Dim... don’t poke my nose,” Alex said.

“Dim Dim? Are you talking about your plushie?”

Alex abruptly opened his eyes after hearing the familiar voice.

“G-Guildmaster?” Alex asked as he looked at the beautiful young lady seated beside his bed.

“Who else?” Noelle eyed Alex as if she were a girlfriend who found her boyfriend cheating on her.

“Were you expecting anyone else?”

“Ah...” Alex blinked after realizing that he was just dreaming.

It had been a while since he had dreamed about his guildmaster, which he felt was a blessing.

Alex didn’t want to forget about her. But he was no longer on Earth after all and had no way to see her. Memories ought to fade after a long time, so he was grateful to find her before him.

Although he knew this was just a dream, Noelle was simply so vivid that it seemed real. He couldn’t help but thank the God of Dreams for giving him such a sweet dream.

“Ah?” Noelle arched an eyebrow. “Is that all you’re going to say after this beautiful girl traveled all the way just to see you?”

“I love you, Guildmaster,” Alex said in a serious tone. “Please marry me.”

“Huh?!” Noelle immediately backed away and looked at Alex in disbelief. “Y-You’re Alex, right? You’re not some kind of evil spirit possessing this man, right?”

Alex couldn’t help but chuckle after seeing the young lady’s reaction.

“I’m just joking,” Alex said as he did a few light stretches before getting out of bed. “Guildmaster, I’m hungry. Please cook me something.”

“Wow, look at this guy.” Noelle crossed her arms over her chest. “Since when have you been so demanding? Are you a child who wants to be spoiled?”

“Yes.” Alex nodded. “I want to be spoiled.”

Since this was just a dream, his self-control tucked itself into some deep corner. Right now, he was doing everything he wouldn’t have dared before, like teasing his guildmaster to see reactions he had never seen before.

“You’re the worst guild member,” Noelle clicked her tongue. “Get up and clean up. I’ll cook you something.”

“Nice!” Alex did a fist pump.

Just like always, the two worked together to clean up a little before Noelle went to the kitchen to prepare their breakfast, which was a simple meal of egg-fried rice, bacon, and eggs.

But for Alex, this meal surpassed those prepared in Michelin Restaurants. After all, the cook had been his beautiful guildmaster!

"Say ahh..." Noelle said as she tried to spoon-feed Alex with some egg-fried rice.

"Ahhh..." Alex opened his mouth to eat and even closed his eyes to better taste the food. He knew that this was a dream, so the food might not even have a taste. However, he planned to imagine what it would taste like with all his might.

But after leaving his mouth open for quite some time, there didn't seem to be any food whatsoever, which made him wonder if his guild master was pranking him.

Because of this, he opened his eyes and saw something that he never expected to happen.

There was a young lady, her long hair hued by a combination of red and orange.

The spoon that Noelle had extended to him was now inside Latifa's mouth, which made Alex wonder if his dream had done a crossover.

The young fox lady then pulled back and chewed the food properly inside her mouth. She then pulled out a chair and sat beside Noelle, who had the same dumbfounded look as Alex had right now.

Chapter 278: A Dream Within A Dream [Part 2]

"...Latifa?" Alex asked in confusion.

The young fox lady didn't reply immediately. Instead, she rested her chin on the back of her intertwined hands and eyed Noelle as if memorizing her face.

Noelle stared at Latifa with amusement before shifting her gaze to Alex.

"Alex, is she a cosplayer friend of yours?" Noelle asked. "What is she doing inside your house?"

"Um... she is..." Alex glanced at Latifa, thinking of what to say next.

But before Alex could answer properly, his club member beat him to it.

“My name is Latifa,” Latifa replied. “What is your name?”

“Noelle,” Noelle answered.

“Noelle... I don’t remember Alex mentioning your name in the past.”

“Oh, really?”

“Really.”

Alex watched helplessly as the two girls eyed each other.

A moment later, his guildmaster glanced in his direction with a smile that said, “you got a lot of explaining to do, young man,” which made Alex feel as if his sweet dream was starting to turn into a nightmare.

The two girls stared at each other for a minute before Noelle stood up from her seat.

“Are you hungry?” Noelle asked.

“A little.” Latifa nodded.

“Good. I made an extra serving just in case Alex asked for seconds. You can have it.”

“Thank you.”

The young lady then went to the kitchen to prepare Latifa’s food.

Using this opportunity, Alex immediately asked Latifa what she was doing in his dream!

“Why are you inside my dream?” Alex asked. “What are you doing here?”

Latifa blinked. “This is a dream. I’m here because you thought of me subconsciously.”

“Huh?! No, I didn’t!”

“What makes you so sure? By the way, this is just a dream. Don’t take it too seriously.”

Alex still felt suspicious.

The game never mentioned anything about Latifa having the ability to enter dreams. That said, he wondered if he really subconsciously thought of her, which made her appear inside his dream.

Alex rubbed his temples in disbelief. “Are you here to be my wingman or something?”

“I’m not here to help,” Latifa replied with a serene smile. “I’m just here.”

“That... doesn’t make any sense.”

“It’s a dream. It doesn’t have to.”

Alex opened his mouth to argue but then realized he was arguing inside a dream.

A dream where his Guildmaster and Latifa were seated under the same roof, having polite conversation one moment and veiled hostility the next.

Suddenly it hit Alex.

He then looked at Latifa in disbelief before saying what was on his mind.

“Latifa... is it possible that you’re here because...” Alex trailed off.

Latifa narrowed her eyes as she waited for the young man to finish whatever he was going to say next.

“You’re here because deep inside my subconscious mind, I was thinking of going on a double date with you and my guildmaster?” Alex continued.

Latifa didn’t reply and simply smiled at Alex. But for the briefest of moments, he thought he saw a bulging nerve at the corner of Latifa’s forehead, like she was angered by something.

Before the two could continue their conversation, Noelle returned and handed Latifa the food she prepared.

“Thank you,” Latifa replied and ate her food properly.

Since the atmosphere had changed a bit, the three focused on eating together instead of talking.

When it finally ended, Alex took the dishes to the sink and washed them, leaving the girls behind.

The young fox lady observed Noelle, who was also observing her with a mischievous smile on her face.

“Do you like Alex?” Noelle asked out of the blue, which took Latifa by surprise.

“No,” Latifa answered. “We’re just friends.”

“Friends?”

“Yes. Just friends. How about you? What is your relationship with him?”

Noelle thought for a bit before giving her answer.

“We’re just friends as well,” Noelle replied.

“What a coincidence.”

“I know right?”

The two ladies then started to chat with each other, and their topic was none other than Alex.

“What is your favorite food?” Noelle asked. “I have a feeling that we’ll be seeing each other more often, so I’ll prepare in advance.”

“I like sausage,” Latifa answered.

“Do you want the small one, the long one, or the Jumbo?”

“I want something that is slightly above average. It has more meat in it.”

“Oh! I feel the same way.”

Alex, who was paying close attention to their conversation from the sink, almost dropped the glass that he was washing.

The two girls were just talking about sausages, but for some reason, he felt like there was a deeper meaning behind their conversation.

However, just as he was about to finish washing the dishes, Noelle suddenly asked a question that almost made him drop the plate he was holding.

"If Alex were to feed you a sausage, would you eat it?" Noelle asked.

"I guess?" Latifa replied. "I mean, if it's from Alex, it should be fine, right?"

Alex didn't know whether he should return to the dining area or stay in the kitchen to listen to the two girls talking.

After an internal struggle, he decided to just listen for now.

But for some reason, the conversation suddenly came to a halt.

"I know that you're done with the dishes, Alex," Latifa said. "Eavesdropping is not good, you know?"

After being called out by Latifa, Alex had no choice but to return to the dining room and sat between the two ladies, who seemed to have cozied up with each other after talking about sausages.

"So..." Alex cleared his throat, trying to ease the pressure. "You two seem... friendly now."

Latifa turned to him with a suspiciously calm expression. "We bonded over meat preferences."

Noelle leaned forward. "We've reached sausage diplomacy."

Alex coughed. "That sounds like something that should be illegal in at least three countries."

Latifa blinked in confusion, while Noelle only smirked, as if understanding what Alex was trying to say.

"Latifa, do you want to come with us?" Noelle asked. "Alex and I will go out on a date now."

This time, it was Alex's turn to be surprised. He couldn't help but do a fist pump under the table because his guildmaster seemed to have gotten bolder.

"A date?" Latifa tilted her head. "Are you talking about the dates of the month?"

'Oh, you sweet summer child!' Alex thought. 'This is what you get for sleeping all day. You don't have any worldly knowledge!'

Noelle reached out to hold Latifa's hand and smiled. "A date is when two people, especially couples, go to places together. They can play, they can eat, and do fun things together. Simply put, it is a special time where lovers deepen their connection with each other. Since this is your first time going out on a date, I will help you understand what a date is!"

"Eh?!" Latifa blushed after understanding what the meaning of a date was.

Seeing her beet-red face, Alex couldn't stop his heart from skipping a beat because of how cute Latifa looked at that moment.

Suddenly, Alex thought of something important.

Although this was only a dream, the world outside of his apartment was very different from the world where Latifa lived.

Earlier, he caught Latifa paying close attention to her surroundings, looking very curious about things inside his room.

And yet, she didn't ask him any questions. She didn't need to either since question marks were practically drawn all over her face.

'This is just a dream, Alex,' Alex reminded himself. 'I'm sure nothing will go wrong if I take them out on a date... right?'

But just as they planned to leave the apartment, Noelle suddenly stopped before heaving a sigh.

"I guess we will go on a date next time," Noelle said sadly. "It looks like time's up."

"Time's up?" Alex frowned. "What do you mean, guildmast—"

Alex wasn't able to finish whatever he was going to say because he suddenly felt a jolt of pain, which forced him to wake up.

"Huh?!" Alex found half of his body lying on the floor.

It seemed that he had fallen off the couch during his sleep, which had forced him to wake up from his sleep.

"Nghhh." Alex rubbed his head as he slowly propped himself up. "Just when it was about to get better..."

He could still vividly remember the dream he just had and felt disappointed that it had come to a stop.

The young man glanced at the sleeping Latifa before shaking his head.

'That can't be possible, right?' Alex thought.

Feeling aggrieved, he once again decided to take a nap.

However this time, he no longer had a dream and slept a blank sleep, which made a certain fox lady feel disappointed.

She, too, didn't like how the dream ended, for she wanted to know more about the world where the young man with dark-brown hair had lived during his past life.

Chapter 279: Nothing Worth Having Comes Easy [Part 1]

Alex silently stared at the blue window screen in front of him.

Although it had been a couple of days since they returned from their trip to the Heracle Mountains, the experience he gained from the trial he had gone through was still fresh in his mind.

Near the end of the trial, when he and Latifa let themselves go so that Kael and Princess Yvraine could take over, they unexpectedly tapped into each other's memories.

Obviously, it was impossible to see everything within such a short time, but what they found out was enough to better understand each other.

For Alex, he finally knew why Latifa slept all the time. But vice versa, the fox lady must've seen his past life. But they unanimously didn't bring it up.

It was just that, when he dreamt of his guildmaster, Noelle, Latifa unexpectedly showed up, and the oddness of it all made him believe that it might not be a simple coincidence.

Perhaps his subconscious mind truly thought of Latifa, worried about the things she might've seen from his memories. He didn't know to what extent she saw, but he feared she'd have a misunderstanding.

A game.

Endless Leveling Online was a game, and Latifa was one of the characters in that game.

If the young lady had seen him play that game, it would only be normal for her to have questions.

Frankly, Alex dreaded that she'd confront him and demand that he tell her everything.

If someone were to tell you that your life was a lie, and you were just part of a game world, how would you react?

There was only one word to describe that reaction, and that would be none other than...

Denial.

Alex stared blankly at the blue window screen, which showed his rewards in the Trial of Morgim.

[You Have Completed An Arcana Quest!]

[Quest Name: The War-Forged Past Completed!]

— First part of 3 Chain Quests Complete!

Rewards:

— You have acquired the second half of the Verdant Throne.

— You have gained 5,000 Arcana Points

— You have gained two levels.

— You have gained +20 Stat Points to Magic

— You learned the skill, Light.

< Second Half Of Verdant Throne >

— Increases your stamina regeneration rate by 200%

— Increase your healing regeneration by 200%

— increase your physical defense by 100%

— Once a day, when your health point goes lower than 10%, you will instantly regain 50% of your maximum health.

< Light >

— creates an orb of light that illuminates your surroundings up to a seven-meter radius.

— — —

Alex then glanced at his status page to check how many stats he would need to become a Rank 3 Oathkeeper.

— — —

Alex Stratos

Age: 17

Alignment: Chaotic Good

Mana: 326/326

Job Class: Oathkeeper

Subclass: Demon Slayer

Strength – 79[+6]

Intelligence – 30 [+3]

Dexterity – 20 [+3]

Agility – 110 [+3]

Constitution – 77 [+4]

Stamina – 77 [+4]

Magic – 323 [+3]

Luck – 24 [+3]

Available Stat Points: 0

AP: 16,740

Divine Skill: Voice of the End.

Unique Skill: Power of the Verdant Throne.

Active Skills: Oathkeeper's Duty, Shield [EX], Shield Bash, Unyielding Pact, Echo of the Sworn, Balance Breaker, Shield Charge, Rear-Ender Thrust, Enchant Fire, Enchant Holy, Culling Blade, Grand Cross, Light.

Passive Skills: Improved Stone Throw, Head Shot, Rebuke of Steel, Shield of Thorns, Multi-task.

[Difficulty Level: Hell Mode]

A/N: When calculating stats for a Rank up, it would always be calculated using Alex's base stats without any passive bonuses from skills, or equipment.

"My combined stats is two-hundred ninety-six," Alex muttered. "In order to become a Rank 3 Oathkeeper, I need five hundred combined stat points."

His current stats weren't that bad. If anything, his improvement was quite fast, given that he had only been in the world of Arcana for a few months.

However, his fight against Willow and the Barbarian King served as a big reminder to Alex—that his opponents would not wait for him to get stronger.

If not for his passive skills that prevented him from losing his life over insta-kill attacks, repeatedly facing off against someone whose Rank was two or more levels above him would've been suicide.

Of course, pure defense without offense wouldn't have been enough to save his life. Fortunately, Alex had one more trump card—his reflection ability. As long as he could tank one hit from the enemy, they would suffer from the reflection damage, which would definitely deal decent damage against them.

But that only worked against physical and aura-based attacks.

If magic was used, his reflection ability would not activate. In other words, fighting against Mages needed a different kind of approach.

Fran was already a Rank 4 Dwarven Berserker, which meant that her combined stats were above eight hundred.

Those who could step onto that stage at her current age weren't geniuses anymore.

They'd already be regarded as prodigies, and sometimes, Heaven's Chosen.

Latifa was a Rank 3 Celestial Walker, but she would have an explosive growth in their second year, which would boost her to Rank 5 Celestial Walker before the start of her Third Year in the academy.

If she followed the normal route, then no problem would happen in the story.

But if she strayed off the right path, she would become one of the Mini Bosses whom the Protagonist would have to fight to the death.

A Rank 5 Celestial Walker was no joke, and truth be told, Alex didn't want to face that ending.

'It's a little vexing, but I need to get stronger as fast as possible,' Alex thought as he looked at his stats.

Then, the image of the young fox lady appeared inside his mind.

'I also need to have a talk with Latifa.' Alex sighed. 'I need to know just how much of my memory she has seen.'

Thinking about her made Alex sigh a second time.

"Dim Dim, I would just like to confirm something," Alex said in a serious tone. "This world is real, right?"

Dim Dim nodded. "Dim."

“And Earth is real too, right?”

“Dim.”

“Then, why does ELO know about the future events of this world?” Alex asked. “If I didn’t interfere, would Charles really die? If I didn’t try to save Vaan, would Willow succeed in taking over his body and devouring his soul? Would Chuck experience that bad ending where Xenia *bleeped* him?”

Dim Dim didn’t answer right away. Instead, it jumped toward the window and looked at the stars in the sky.

It was as if it was looking for the answers to Alex’s question from the sky’s countless stars, twinkling and lighting up the dark as if to give those who see them feel hope despite the challenges that they were facing every day.

Chapter 280: Nothing Worth Having Comes Easy [Part 2]

A minute of silence passed before Dim Dim spoke once more.

“Dim Dim,” Dim Dim said, still looking at the stars in the sky.

The Dim Sum God’s answer offered no help. It couldn’t tell the young man how the game Endless Leveling Online knew about the future events of the world.

Dim Dim, Lily, and Cupid might be the game’s mascot, but Eriol, the God of Games and the one managing the game, never let them see or know anything about it.

Eriol had simply used his ability to create a simulation similar to future sight and compiled these events in the game that he was making, hoping that someone out there would be able to find the solution to the problems that the world of Arcana was facing.

Yes.

Endless Leveling Online was a game that revolved around the World of Arcana, and the characters that were fated to help protect it from destruction.

Dim Dim made sure to assure Alex that everything he had experienced so far was real, not just part of a dream.

The world of Arcana was real, and the people that lived in it were real people.

They weren't NPCs, and the Dim Sum God made a point to thank Alex for not treating them like so.

"Dim Dim." Dim Dim turned around and gave Alex the beady-eyed look, which made the young man cough lightly.

"Okay, I admit that I just made up the part about Chuck getting *bleeped* by Princess Xenia." Alex admitted.

Such a thing didn't happen in the story, and frankly, he didn't know if Chuck and Princess Xenia's marriage arrangement had been canceled in the story.

The young man then walked towards the window, picked up Dim Dim, and placed the latter on top of his head.

"You know, I didn't know how many times I wished to transmigrate to this world and become a Protagonist," Alex said softly. "But now that I'm here, I understand that it's not a trouble-free world. The Heroes and Heroines are living their lives to the fullest, not knowing what they will face in the future."

"There are many times when I feel like I should just enjoy my life and not worry about the problems in the future. But deep inside, I know it's impossible for me to do that. As long as I am here in Frieden Academy, I will get involved in dangerous situations whether I like it or not."

"Dim." Dim Dim nodded.

"But you know what, Dim Dim?" Alex smiled faintly. "I don't regret saving Charles. I don't regret saving Vaan. And I don't regret giving Eris the medicine that will cure her sickness."

Dim Dim smiled faintly and listened to the young man's recollection.

"I don't regret being sent to this world. It's just that... the process of how you guys sent me here was... traumatizing."

Dim Dim giggled after hearing Alex's complaint about being sent to Arcana through a cannon.

"I want to live a great life," Alex said softly. "And die a great death. That is what I believe in the past, and even now, that is still my belief. But in order to get that ending, I need to work hard, right?"

Dim Dim's usual playful tone faded, his voice soft but steady. "Dim Dim."

"You're right, Dim Dim." Alex agreed. "Nothing worth having comes easy."

The little bun looked out the window at the stars. "The road will burn your feet... the climb will scrape your hands... but when you hold it in the end, you'll know it was worth every step."

Alex blinked once then twice before picking up the little bun in his head.

"Since when did you learn to speak long sentences?" Alex asked.

"Dim?" Dim Dim blinked innocently.

"You're still denying it huh?" Alex lightly squeezed the little bun's cheeks, making the little bun wiggle from his hands, trying its best to escape.

Truth be told, Alex didn't know if Dim Dim was just saying "Dim" or speaking in sentences because he always understood what it was saying.

In the end, he stopped squishing its squishy cheeks and placed it on the windowsill, the two of them both looking at the stars in the sky.

Stars that were very different from the stars that were seen from Earth.

“Hey, Dim Dim, at the end of this journey, I pray for everyone to live a happy ending,” Alex said.

Till now, he hoped that Kael and Princess Yvraine really got the happy ending they deserved as both of them rose up to become part of the stars in the sky.

“Dim.” Dim Dim also wished the same.

It also hoped that the young man who had been sent into its world would be happy and get the ending he wished for.

But like it mentioned earlier, nothing worth having comes easy.

Life would not always have sunshine and rainbows.

There would be storms and cloudy days when you feel like everyone and everything were against you.

Days when you feel that everything you do was wrong, and nothing you do would change it.

There were many people who suffer everyday for many different reasons.

But that was what life was all about.

Only by experiencing hardship would you feel the sweet taste of success.

Only by experiencing hunger would you appreciate how great it was to be full.

Truth be told, Dim Dim wanted Alex to be a little selfish.

Since the day that he was sent to the world of Arcana, the young man always had a goal in mind.

His first goal was to help Charles Lambert reunite with his family.

His second goal was to save Vaan from his pitiful fate.

As for his third goal? Dim Dim didn't know about it.

But it could vaguely feel that Alex understood that in order to achieve that goal, he needed to be strong enough to reach it.

It was the God of Arcana, but it had lost most of its Divinity when it created the world.

Dim Dim was powerful and powerless at the same time.

Gods were said to be omnipotent and omniscient.

But was that really the case?

Dim Dim wasn't omnipotent nor omniscient.

And frankly, it also believed that none of the Gods in the Temple of the Gods were like that.

They might be strong, and some were indeed extremely strong—more than most Gods.

But even they couldn't possibly know everything about the world.

Even Eriol, who had created countless simulations and had compiled these events in the game of ELO, still wished for others to look for endless possibilities.

He encouraged people to find different endings.

Allowing diversity to flow into the world, proving that there was such a thing as "Free Will".

And he chose Alex because he was the only one who managed to change the fate of Charles Lambert.

A pitiful person who wasn't supposed to be in the academy with him right now.

"Let's go to sleep, Dim Dim," Alex lightly patted the little bun's head. "Tomorrow is another day."

"Dim!" Dim Dim smiled and jumped towards Alex's bed, and tumbled on the bed sheets while giggling.

Chuck wasn't in the room because he said that he was working on something and had holed up in the laboratory of the clock tower.

Ever since he returned from the Heracle Mountains, the teenage boy had matured a bit.

But he also acquired a new quirk, which made Alex scratch his head from time to time.

The teenage boy had also gotten into a lot of trouble in the past few days because of this new quirk of his, which Alex believed was still stuck with him after accomplishing the trial in the Heracle Mountains.

In fact, it wasn't only Chuck.

A few of his members still hadn't broken free from the roles that they had played, which definitely had touched their lives... for better or for worse.