

Endless 321

Chapter 321: Lavinia's Worries

Lavinia sighed for the umpteenth time after the young noble had left her alone.

Ever since Alex's victory over Prince Garen two days ago, his popularity among the First and Second Years had skyrocketed.

Even the Third and Fourth Years who hadn't taken him seriously in the past had no choice but to pay attention to him now.

Their curiosity naturally led them to gather more information about him.

Of course, others had done the same in the past.

The Student Council President, Theo Ashborne.

Princess Aeris, the older sister of Prince Kaelen and Lapiz, had also tried to secure any and all information regarding Alex.

Even Prince Edward had ordered the kingdom's intelligence division to run a background check on this mysterious young man.

Last but not least, the current President of the Merchant Alliance had mobilized the crest club's resources to uncover Alex's background.

The moment Alex won the duel, the Merchant Alliance seized the opportunity and started selling information about him to curious students.

That included all of his exploits on the Floating Islands of Thalaria, as well as his adventures in the Etherion Domain that the famed Clawford Tribe controlled.

The aspiring knights, who were awed by Alex's performance, focused on one thing and one thing only.

Alex's Job Class.

The Merchant Alliance naturally sold this information as well, so it had only been a matter of time before everyone learned of his Job Class.

Oathkeeper.

For most people, it was their first time hearing of such a Job Class.

After careful digging, it was revealed that this was a Hidden Class that could only be obtained in the Etherion Domain.

As such, Prince Edward and some of the noble families of the Kingdom of Avalon approached Lavinia, hoping that the Clawford Tribe would allow them access to the Etherion Domain so others could also claim this Hidden Job Class.

Though overwhelmed by such requests, the royals had directly asked her about it, so the only thing Lavinia could do was relay the news to her grandfather and let him decide how to handle this matter.

Frankly, the young lady was happy for Alex—he was finally receiving the recognition he deserved. But the aftermath of the duel also left her feeling quite stressed since the exposure of Alex's Hidden Class had made quite a headache for the Clawford Tribe.

As one of the Pillars of the Kingdom, they were duty-bound to the King. If he himself was asking the Clawford Tribe for a favor, they were obliged to agree.

Although Prince Edward claimed that he had conveyed the news to his father, the King had yet to issue an official decree asking for access to the Etherion Domain.

Perhaps Lavinia's grandfather needed to travel to the Capital City of Harmonia and talk with the King about this matter in private.

She could only wait till their discussion was over to know what they had talked about.

Even so, she was not sure whether there could be multiple Oathkeepers at the same time.

Unlike other Hidden Classes such as Horizon Striker, Ninja, and Demon Slayer, the Oathkeeper had only made its appearance after hundreds of years.

Alex had shared the requirements needed to unlock the Hidden Class to Ramza, believing this Job Class was very important to the Clawford Tribe.

He could have kept it a secret, but after talking to the first Oathkeeper, Leonard Hartwell, the young man realized how much the founder of the Clawford Tribe cared for his people.

As such, Alex decided to spill everything he knew about Hidden Class. That way, someone else could continue their legacy and pick up the mantle after Alex had passed on.

It was his responsibility to pass the torch to the next generation, allowing the Clawford Tribe to prosper.

'Asking for permission to enter the Etherion Domain is understandable... but why did some of them propose marriage to me?' Lavinia thought.

Her grandfather never planned to use Lavinia or Cairo as tools to gain any advantage through political marriages.

Ramza believed that everyone was free to choose whom they wished to love and spend their lifetime with.

"I wonder what he's doing right now," Lavinia muttered as she decided to take a stroll in the academy to clear her mind.

She had only been walking for ten minutes when she saw Daisy, Dim Dim, and a Forest Wolf taking a stroll some distance away from her.

“Dim Dim,” Lavinia called out to the little bun, who immediately looked in her direction.

The Dim Sum God smiled and greeted Lavinia with a wave of its little stubby hand.

“Dim!”

The students had already gotten used to seeing Daisy and Dim Dim patrol the academy and no longer treated the Doom Cow as a dangerous monster.

But this was the first time Lavinia had seen the Forest Wolf, which she assumed was one of the Beasts Fran was rearing on her farm.

The Forest Wolf was only a meter tall and still looked quite young.

Based on its presence alone, Lavinia estimated it to be a Rank 2 Monster, making it a decent challenge for the First Years.

“Is this a new friend of yours?” Lavinia asked.

Dim Dim nodded. “Dim!”

“What is their name?”

“Rex.”

“That’s a good name.” Lavinia smiled. “Is he friendly?”

Dim Dim pondered for a while before shaking its head.

“Dim.”

“Oh? You’re training him so that he will not randomly attack people?”

“Dim!”

The Forest Wolf eyed Lavinia, his gaze sharp like his claws. However, he didn’t make any move to approach her. He simply held his ground, knowing that if he didn’t, Daisy would stomp on him without fail.

Rex was the new addition to the Farm Beasts that Fran was taking care of. She had come across the injured Forest Wolf a few days ago and tended to his injuries.

Thinking it would be best if Rex stayed with them until he was fully recovered, the kind dwarf told the other Beasts on the farm to be friendly to him.

Naturally, Dim Dim, the ever-friendly bun, decided to befriend Rex.

However, the Forest Wolf growled at the Little Bun, which made Daisy smack the wolf’s head in anger.

Since then, the Forest Wolf treated Dim Dim as a “must-not-be-offended” little creature. It had been easy to engrave in his mind since all the Farm Beasts would emit killing intent the moment he tried to intimidate Dim Dim.

Fortunately, the Forest Wolf didn’t hold a grudge against the little bun, especially after eating some of its pork dumplings.

Since then, Rex decided to stay at the farm instead of returning to the Mistral Weave Forest, where every day was a life-and-death struggle.

Of course, Dim Dim was more than happy to have a new friend.

However, since Rex might be treated as a wild monster if it was spotted in the academy, Dim Dim decided to take him along during their daily patrols. If the students became more accustomed to the Forest Wolf, they would be less likely to react badly.

Rex was also wearing a collar with a badge that represented Fran's club, which ought to let the students know that it was not a wild monster but a tamed one under the academy's management.

Lavinia, who understood Dim Dim's intention, lightly patted the little bun's head, making its smile widen.

Suddenly, she remembered what she had wanted to ask Dim Dim earlier and decided to quickly ask the question now before she forgot it once more.

"Dim Dim, where is Alex?"

"Dim Dim."

"He's at Fran's farm?"

"Dim!"

Lavinia frowned before nodding her head in understanding.

"Thank you," Lavinia said. "You can continue your patrols now."

"Aye!" Dim Dim gave the young lady a salute before urging Daisy and Rex to resume their patrol.

With this information in hand, Lavinia decided to visit Fran's farm, which she had never been to before.

Since they were classmates, she believed that it wouldn't be out of place if she came to visit her, right?

With these thoughts inside her head, she decided to go to where Alex was and complain a bit about her circumstances.

Although she knew that this was a terrible excuse, she truly wanted to vent a little bit of her frustration at the young man, who was currently waiting to eat Fran's homemade cooking, which he loved very much.

Chapter 322: It's The Taste Of Home

The walk to the farm didn't take long, and Lavinia immediately saw Alex when she arrived at her destination.

The young man was currently chopping some firewood, holding an axe in both hands.

He was so focused on what he was doing, he failed to notice Lavinia standing only a few meters away from him, admiring the young man doing some labor.

But her gaze wasn't focused on Alex's face. It lingered on his lean and toned body that was on full display—the young man had taken his shirt off to prevent sweat from drenching it as he chopped wood.

Suddenly, Lavinia felt a presence beside her.

As she turned to her side, she saw Lumi materialize with a knowing smirk.

"Look at him," Lumi whispered, pretending to be scandalized. "This guy is trying to seduce good, proper girls from polite families by flaunting his body so openly. Lavinia, why don't you give this shameless guy a piece of your mind?"

Lavinia looked at Alex again. This time, she scanned him from head to foot.

She couldn't help but nod in agreement to Lumi's statement.

Alex was already quite handsome, and if the ladies were to see his toned body, they would definitely find it... incredibly appealing to their eyes.

“Tsk.” Lumi clicked her tongue as she activated a recording crystal so she could bless Latifa’s eyes later when she returned to the clock tower.

Lavinia wanted to tell Lumi not to film Alex, but when she opened her mouth to rebuke her friend the words that came out were, “Could you make a copy for me too?”

Finally sensing that there were others around him, Alex turned to look at the two ladies, who quickly put on solemn expressions.

Alex blinked once then twice before returning the axe to its rightful place.

He then picked up the firewood on the ground and added it neatly to a pile of firewood he had chopped earlier.

The young man then took out a hand towel from his storage ring and carefully wiped the sweat from his body.

Although he admitted that getting stared at by his two club members made him feel a little embarrassed, he endured their heated gazes and calmly wiped himself properly.

When he was done, he took the shirt that he had set aside after folding and slipped it on as casually as he could.

Only after he was done did he finally address the two beautiful teenagers, who were still eyeing him like they were in a famine and he was some kind of premium steak prepared by the best chef in the world.

“Well, what are you two doing here?” Alex asked.

"I am here on official business," Lumi replied calmly.

"And what is that official business?" Alex inquired.

"Paying close attention to suspicious people."

"... Then why are you here?"

"Because you are one of those suspicious people, obviously."

The corner of Alex's lips twitched, having zero idea why Lumi had labeled him a suspicious person.

Not wanting to continue this conversation, he shifted his gaze to Lavinia.

Knowing her, she would definitely have a good reason for being here, right?

"I came here to complain a bit," Lavinia stated as she held Alex's gaze.

"Complain a bit?" Alex frowned. It seemed like everyone wanted to speak cryptically to him. "What do you mean?"

Lavinia explained the things that had happened after Alex's win. The young man's frown deepened as he listened to her.

"I'm sorry," Alex said. "I didn't think that far ahead. Have you received any reply from your grandfather?"

If the Clawford Tribe was forced to share their Etherion Domain with the Kingdom, it would definitely not sit well with the Catkins.

However, a Job Class that could easily counter the Solar Knights of the Solara Kingdom wasn't something that Kingdom of Avalon was willing to pass up on.

Although the three Kingdoms were technically in an alliance, there were still conflicts between them, and these conflicts were usually resolved by duels between their knights.

A profession that had the ability to resist the Solar Magic of the Solar Knights was a very tempting option for the Kingdom of Avalon.

Little did they know, it wasn't Alex's Job Class that made the fight look easy.

It was his shield, Svalinn, the mortal enemy of Fire and Solar Magic.

Of course, Alex had no intention of letting anyone know about this. After all, Svalinn was one of his trump cards.

"I'm still waiting for Grandfather's reply," Lavinia replied. "But I'm sure he will have a private word with His Majesty about this matter."

Alex agreed. In his eyes, the Patriarch of the Clawford Tribe, Ramza, could certainly be very shrewd.

Even if he opened the Etherion Domain to the Kingdom, he would definitely reap some rewards in the process, ultimately making him the winner in this exchange.

But there was one thing that piqued Alex's curiosity.

Was it possible to have more than one Oathkeeper at a time?

The Oathkeeper Job Class was a Hidden Job Class that "The Lovers" had personally bestowed upon Leonard Hartwell.

Even if others were to meet the requirements for the Oathkeeper Job Class, Alex assumed they would still need to gain the approval of the Deity to obtain it.

Perhaps reading his thoughts, Lavinia smiled and offered Alex some encouraging words.

“Even if another Oathkeeper appears, the Clawford Tribe will always be on your side,” Lavinia said firmly.

“Thank you,” Alex replied, rather touched and a little surprised. “Knowing that the Catkins will always have my back puts me at ease.”

Alex could still remember how hyped the Catkins had been when they realized that Alex was going to participate in a Monster Stampede.

Many warriors had volunteered. In fact, even a captain of an airship had offered his services for free!

Having reliable allies just because they wanted to fight alongside the Oathkeeper was something that made Alex very happy.

So, hearing Lavinia’s words silenced his misgivings.

“Well, having more Oathkeepers might not be a bad thing.” Alex smiled.

“But whether there can be more than one at the same time is yet to be seen,” Lavinia commented. “To be honest, I wish you would remain the sole Oathkeeper of this era. That way, the prestige of the Job Class will not get diluted.”

“I feel the same way,” Alex admitted.

Suddenly, the door at the back of the house opened, and a dwarven lady wearing an apron appeared.

“Lunch is ready, Alex,” Fran said before shifting her gaze to Lavinia and Lumi. She did not seem surprised by their presence on her farm. “I have prepared a lot, so feel free to join us for lunch.”

“You girls should try Fran’s cooking,” Alex insisted. “It’s the taste of home.”

Fran blushed a bit as she waved her hands frantically.

“Don’t listen to Alex,” Fran said hastily. “He’s exaggerating.”

Lavinia and Lumi glanced at each other before nodding together.

“I’d love to eat a home-cooked meal for once,” Lavinia said. “The food in the cafeteria is good, but I still miss the taste of home.”

“Well, I just eat what I want to eat,” Lumi stated. “So I’ll partake in the meal that you have carefully prepared for Alex.”

Fran’s face grew a shade redder, and she turned around to enter the house in a hurry, as if she had a pot boiling over on her stove.

Alex followed behind her, looking very pleased that he would get to eat Fran’s food after a few days away from the farm.

Lavinia, who was only a few steps behind Alex, wondered if she should pick up cooking. It did seem like Alex enjoyed meals that were especially made just for him.

Chapter 323: I Can Already Tell What You’re Thinking

“Thank you for the meal,” Lavinia said softly.

“No trouble,” Fran replied. “Feel free to come and visit some other time. It’s more fun to eat with friends.”

The meal had just ended, and the girls were helping to wash the dishes.

Alex was asked to help clean the table, but the moment he was done, he was promptly kicked out of the house because the girls were planning to have a private chat.

The young man didn't mind this treatment and was even happy to see Lavinia and the usually snobbish Lumi warming up to Fran.

Had it been possible, he would have already invited Fran to join his club.

He knew she would reject his offer. After all, Fran was already part of the Farming Club as its Vice President.

Luckily for her, the President was none other than Finn. He obviously didn't want his sister to be burdened with too many responsibilities.

The funds given to the club each month were spent on food for the Beasts under their care, as well as salaries for the club members helping out on the farm.

It was a club that didn't have any conflicting interest with the Crest Clubs, so none of them bothered Fran and Finn.

Half an hour later, the girls finally left the house and bade Fran goodbye.

Alex also bade his goodbye and walked back to the Ironheart Dormitory with Lavinia.

"You're right about her cooking, Alex," Lavinia remarked. "It did taste like home."

"Right?" Alex grinned.

Fran's cooking might not be as sophisticated as the food served in the cafeteria, but it had a homey taste to it.

Also, knowing that the ingredients used were all grown on Fran's farm, its quality was assured.

"Hey, if I cooked something, would you eat it?" Lavinia suddenly asked as she glanced at Alex.

"As long as it's not poisonous, I will eat it," Alex answered.

"Hmm..." Lavinia smiled faintly as they continued to walk side by side.

Remembering their first interactions, Alex could tell that he and Lavinia had grown closer with each other.

Of course, he wasn't dense. He understood her feelings. But both of them seemed to have an unspoken understanding that now might not be the best time to pursue these things.

When Alex had played ELO, he hadn't encountered anyone named Lavinia.

He had only known about Cairo because of the Heaven Sword's popularity among players.

Alex didn't know if the Mutant Spider incident happened in the original story, which might be the reason for Lavinia's absence.

Deep inside, he wanted to believe that Lavinia also left her mark on history and didn't perish inside the Etherion Domain.

Also, there was one more thing that had been weighing on Alex's mind.

The warning from the Deity who appeared before him after Vaan had made the declaration to live his life for his sake.

“Changing the Fate of others is a double-edged sword. Do not think for a moment that you won’t be paying a price for changing the destinies of others.”

The story was still progressing according to his knowledge, but there had been some changes here and there.

Bringing his club to the Heracle Mountains, the arrival of Prince Kaelen—which wasn’t part of the story progression—and other minor things that Alex believed were the consequences of his actions.

But if he was asked whether he regretted anything, his answer was a firm “No.”

At least, that was what he sincerely believed at that moment.

“Alex... Hey, Alex.”

The young man snapped out of his daze as Lavinia’s voice reached his ears.

“I’m sorry, what were we talking about?” Alex asked apologetically.

“It’s about the event that the Headmaster is preparing for the First Years,” Lavinia said. “I am wondering if I should make some kind of special preparation for it.”

“Ah... about that.” Alex glanced at his surroundings, making sure that no one was around them.

For most people, the secret about the type of Dungeon that the Headmaster was taking them to was, well, a secret. However, it was no mystery to Alex.

He had already purchased some materials from the Exchange Center of the Academy using his academy points. On top of that, he had asked Nessia to help him craft the runes they would be using for the expedition.

The young lady had even complained to Alex that he was acting like a slave driver, though she had been given fairly befitting compensation.

Alex had no defense for this because whenever something like this happened, the first person he talked to was Nessia.

She was the only one who could imbue Rune Magic on certain items, which would be useful during the expedition.

"The dungeon we are going to enter has Undead Monsters inside of it," Alex whispered in Lavinia's ears before taking a step back.

The young man then placed a finger over his lips, telling Lavinia to keep this a secret from everyone.

"Is that why you, Nessia, Charles, and Vaan have been having secret meetings in that special dimension inside the clock tower?" Lavinia inquired.

"Yes," Alex answered. "I'm sorry. It's not that we don't trust you guys. It's just that the fewer people in the know, the less troublesome it will be."

Lapiz might be a member of Endless Horizon, but she was a new member. Her loyalty toward the club could not be overstated.

If Alex were to invite everyone to a meeting and tell them that they would be going to a Dungeon filled with Undead, there was a chance that Lapiz would tell this to her little brother, Prince Kaelen. That, in turn, might affect the agreement between Alex and Prince Kaelen.

Also, many clubs were paying attention to Alex's movements.

If they were to procure many Exorcism Talismans, as well as other items that warded off Undead and Specter-Type Monsters, people might catch up and create countermeasures as well.

Because of this, Alex only purchased talismans without any writing in them and handed them over to Nessia so she could imbue them with rune magic.

He also purchased many items that would not make people think that he was preparing to fight Undead Monsters.

The young man only wanted them to think that he was taking the dungeon expedition seriously.

Even if the other classes and clubs learnt about his transaction history, nothing would stand out too much.

“Thank you for sharing this information with me,” Lavinia said with a smile. “I’ll write Grandpa a letter and ask him to lend me a sword that will be very effective against those types of Dungeon Monsters.”

“Good.” Alex nodded. “You and Renard will play an important role in this mission. I hope both of you will bring our team to victory.”

“Then, shouldn’t you also let Renard know about this?” Lavinia arched an eyebrow.

“What for?” Alex asked back. “Renard’s fighting style won’t change even if I tell him, so there’s no problem even if he isn’t informed beforehand.”

“You and he really don’t get along huh?” Lavinia sighed.

“Actually, Renard and I get along pretty well,” Alex insisted unconvincingly. “At least, in our own way.”

Lavinia shook her head helplessly before bringing up the most important topic.

“Are you sure that everything is going to be fine?” Lavinia asked. “Should we let Charles sit this one out?”

The young lady knew that Charles and Dungeons weren't a good combination.

In fact, she had been quite worried since she learned that they would be doing a dungeon dive with the delegations from the Solara and Faellarun Academy.

"It will be fine," Alex assured her. "Professor Rowan will be there, so there will be no threat at all."

"I can already tell what you're thinking." Lavinia smiled wryly. "It's so evil."

Alex chuckled because his plan was indeed evil.

He would allow the other teams to gain points and dive deeper inside the dungeon before he flipped their worlds upside down.

Of course, he wouldn't have resorted to such a thing if he hadn't been certain that Professor Rowan would be present.

A Dungeon Outbreak might be seen as a calamity to others, but with the Paragon of Space standing guard, those monsters would simply disappear before they could threaten those on the surface.

"Trust me and just have fun in the dungeon," Alex stated.

"Well, if you say so." Lavinia sighed one more time before noticing a familiar figure waiting at the entrance of the Ironheart Academy.

It was none other than Prince Garen, whom Alex had fought a few days ago.

Chapter 324: The Final Destination

This was the first time Alex was seeing Prince Garen since their duel.

The Prince looked like he had fully recovered from that incident, and his gaze remained as sharp as ever.

Standing beside him was Lady Celestria, who was looking at the young man with a complicated expression.

“I’ve been waiting for you, Alex Stratos,” Prince Garen said when Alex was only a few meters away from the gate of the dormitory.

“Your Highness.” Alex gave Prince Garen a brief bow. “How may I help you today?”

“I heard from Caelum that you and Prince Kaelen made a bet,” Prince Garen answered. “I want to join. Prince Kaelen has already given his approval.”

For a brief moment, Alex felt the strong urge to smack Caelum for sharing this information with Prince Galen.

True to his word, Prince Garen no longer bothered Vaan. But it was clear that he was still holding a grudge against Alex for his defeat in their duel.

“If I win, you’ll do me a favor. If you win, I’ll do you a favor.” Prince Garen smiled. “Isn’t this a good way to promote close bonds between the students of our two academies?”

“Well, if you put it that way, I can’t say anything else, Your Highness,” Alex answered. “But theoretically speaking, what will you ask of me if you win?”

“If I win, you will come with me to the Death Valley. It is found in the South of the Solara Kingdom,” Prince Galen replied.

Alex’s face turned solemn when he heard the Prince’s words.

The Tower of the Hermit—which Alex wished to go to with his club members—was located at the Death Valley, sometimes called Black Mist Valley.

But in order to gain access to it, they must first go to the Lunar Forest, where the Second Chain Quest would activate.

This was a Forest that only the Elves could enter, which was the reason why Alex needed to win his best against Prince Kaelen.

Getting his help would make things easier.

Of course, he could also ask Lapiz—maybe even Aeris—to help him enter the forest as part of their Club's Expedition.

However, if the future King of Faellarun personally granted Alex permission, the chances of them being allowed to enter the Lunar Forest would be higher.

"The Death Valley is one of the most mysterious places in the world, Your Highness," Alex noted. "Are you planning to bury me there?"

"I wish," Prince Garen said honestly. Lady Celestria could only smile wryly at how the prince could not be bothered to hide his inner thoughts. "But that's not why I want to invite you to that place. Since you seem resistant to flames, you might be able to help us pass through a ruin. Even Solar Knights like me cannot go through because it is located in a sea of black flames."

"And what is located within that sea of black flames, Your Highness?" Alex asked even though he already knew the answer.

The Tower of the Hermit.

The place that was said to contain all the grimoires in the world, allowing anyone to learn any skill they desired.

Even though only one skill could be chosen, it was a place that countless people—including many aspiring warriors and mages—wished to go.

Their goal?

To learn a Legendary or Divine Skill.

“I don’t know what lies beyond those flames. The records we have are limited, but according to them, only the chosen few can walk across that sea of flames without fearing for their life,” Prince Garren added with a shrug.

“Of course, there were people who tried in the past, but only their ashes are left. Because of that, it has earned the nickname Death Valley. Those who dare to enter it usually don’t come back alive.”

Alex did his best to keep his face calm and looked at the Prince as if this was a troublesome matter.

“That sounds like a dangerous place, Your Highness,” Alex said.

“And yet, you will be going to that place whether I invited you or not, no?” Prince Garen asked with confidence.

“Hah?” Alex arched an eyebrow. “What are you talking about?”

“I’m saying that unless you agree to take me with you, I will personally order the guards that are stationed outside Death Valley to prevent you from entering it,” Prince Garen replied. “Also, don’t bother denying your intention to go there.

“I received this information from a credible source, so there’s no use in trying to worm your way out of this mess. Do not forget that the Death Valley is under the jurisdiction of my Kingdom. You won’t be getting inside without our permission.”

Alex gave Celestria a side-long glance and wondered if this information came from the Saintess of Solara.

'If it's her, then I guess her Deity must've told her about me,' Alex thought. 'Hah... this is troublesome.'

Alex pondered for a bit before reluctantly nodding in agreement.

"Very well, we have a deal," Alex stated. "But if I win, you will not get in the way of our expedition in Death Valley, Your Highness."

"Of course, I won't," Prince Garen replied. "In fact, I will personally give you permission to enter it whenever you wish. Of course, I'll come along as well."

"Uhh... won't that make the bet useless then?" Alex scratched his head. "Whether you win or lose, I still need to take you inside the Death Valley, right?"

"Exactly." Prince Garen grinned. "I call this a win-win situation."

Alex and Lavinia thought that perhaps the Prince had not been taught what win-win really meant, but they decided to let this teachable moment slip by.

"Understood," Alex replied. "Then, we will come to visit Death Valley during Winter Vacation."

"Very well." Prince Garen extended his hand for a handshake. "I look forward to cooperating with you."

Alex accepted the handshake and the two parted on good terms.

When the Prince was no longer in sight, Lavinia tugged on Alex's clothes before asking him a question.

"Is this connected to what we experienced in the Heracle Mountain?" Lavinia wondered.

"Yes," Alex replied. "It is... the final destination of our journey."

“Alex... if the Tower of the Hermit truly exists, then won’t countless factions fight to claim it?” Lavinia inquired.

Alex nodded. “They will. And that’s what worries me. Places like that attract ambitious people, whether they be kings, nobles, sects, or guilds. Some will see it as a chance for power, others as a holy pilgrimage. But in the end, it will all come down to greed.”

“Then... if the Kingdom of Solara already knows about your intentions, isn’t it dangerous to press forward?” Lavinia asked anxiously.

“It is,” Alex admitted. “But the Tower isn’t just a treasure trove. It’s a trial... and trials choose their challengers. Even if a thousand soldiers march into Death Valley, only the chosen ones will pass. The rest will just... burn.”

The irony of it all was that Death Valley was indeed their final destination.

Just as life started, the ending of it would be death, which was the perfect location for the Tower of the Hermit.

The tower which held all the skills in the world could only be accessed by those who had undergone its trials.

And even if they were able to miraculously survive the sea of black flames, they would never find the Tower for only those who were called could access its secrets.

The Heracle Mountain and the Lunar Forest weren’t the only places where such trials were held.

Rather, they were only the places that had been discovered in the game.

Of course, others might have found other similar locations. But they likely kept it to themselves, making it a tightly guarded secret.

So if someone was lucky enough to be at the right place at the right time, then there was a chance that they would also be given an opportunity to enter one of the most mythical places in the world—a tower that contained all the skills that were made ever since the creation of Arcana.

Chapter 325: Oh Sh*t... [Part 1]

With the Dungeon Expedition just around the corner, the First Years were making all sorts of preparations.

The Student Council President had announced that each team would consist of seven members.

Latifa gave Alex a heads-up about her non-participation, while Lapiz informed him that she intended to ask the Headmaster for permission to join her brother's team. With that, the President of Endless Horizon assigned the remaining members of his club to his team.

Nessia, Charles, and Vaan were currently holed up in the secret domain inside the clock tower, working on the tools and consumables they would bring to their expedition.

Knowing how much Chuck loved to run his mouth, Alex conveniently assigned him to a suitable task—to gather information about the preparations of the other teams.

As for Renard, who didn't care either way, Alex left him to do whatever he wished to do.

Alex then went out to meet someone, leaving Dim Dim behind.

The little bun was also making its own preparations, carefully mixing ingredients and putting them inside the vials scattered on top of the round table of the Club Room.

"Dim Dim~"

"Dim Dim~"

"Dim Dim~"

Lavinia and Lotte watched the humming little bun with amusement as the latter filled up one vial after another with its concoctions, some of which were prototypes made with new recipes.

“You look so happy, Dim Dim,” Lotte commented.

“Dim!” Dim Dim nodded.

The little bun liked to stockpile its throwing weapons, which now numbered in the hundreds.

Knowing the future expedition would be filled with the Undead, Dim Dim had bought a gallon of holy water from the Arcana Shop. It had also taken the chance to pick up other useful stuff like Sun Stone Powder.

It even named its new weapons Sacred Poppers and Sunburst Vials.

“By the way, Dim Dim, do you know where Alex went?” Lavinia asked. “When he left, it looked like he was going to fight in a war.”

“Dim Dim.”

“Huh? He’s meeting with a girl?!” Lavinia’s eyes widened in shock.

Latifa, who was sleeping peacefully on the bed, suddenly opened her eyes after hearing the little bun’s answer.

Dim Dim nodded. “Dim!”

“Do you know who she is?” Lotte asked. “Do we know her?”

Dim Dim pondered for a while before shaking its head.

“Dim Dim!”

“You don’t know who she is?”

“Dim!”

Latifa frowned before giving an order. “Lotte.”

“Understood.” Lotte turned into purple mist and vanished from the club room.

Dim Dim blinked before returning to its work.

Alex hadn’t told the Dim Sum God whom he planned to meet, but the little bun was certain that Alex had said that it was a girl.

— — —

Somewhere in the academy...

Alex walked down a long, winding corridor that appeared rather neglected. He was heading toward the old library.

This library was no longer in use, so the path leading to it was mostly deserted.

In fact, nearly no students would go to this place, unless they found themselves lost or were taking a stroll without a destination in mind.

But Alex was planning to meet with someone who had reached out to him through a letter.

While the sender left no name on the letter, Alex believed that it was a girl.

Why?

Because in the game, there was one Named Character who usually stayed in the old library, waiting to feed on lost students unlucky enough to meet her.

Alex wasn't a hundred percent certain that the person who'd sent the letter and the Named Character were indeed the same person.

However, the likelihood of his inference being accurate was quite high.

After walking for several minutes, the young man finally stopped at the door of the old library.

He took a deep breath first to calm his mind before readying his senses to react to any situation that he might find himself in.

Alex opened the door and went inside.

The old library was dimly lit by the few magical lamps hanging on the walls.

The young man scanned his surroundings, trying to find the person who had asked him to come.

"You're here."

A soft, delicate voice reached Alex's ears, making him frown.

Following the voice, his gaze landed on a student standing beside a shelf, a faint smile gracing her face.

'I see. So it's not Eleanora,' Alex thought, but he still didn't lower his guard.

He had really believed that the mischievous vampire girl had set her sights on him and called him to the old library to feast on his blood.

But the person he was facing right now was a different girl. However, she posed no less danger than the vampire girl whom Alex had expected to be waiting for him.

“Were you perhaps expecting a vampire beauty here in the library?” the young lady asked in a teasing tone.

The silver horn on her forehead shone faintly in the dim light, highlighting her pretty face.

“Vampire?” Alex asked back, matching the young lady’s tone. “What vampire? Care to explain to me who this vampire is?”

The young lady smiled faintly as she approached Alex.

“Since we can be considered acquaintances, I’ll give you a warning beforehand,” the young lady replied. “That vampire is targeting you as well.”

“Don’t worry, I have already prepared a garlic spray just for her. She will regret messing with me.” Alex smirked.

His answer made the young lady giggle, for she knew that Vampires couldn’t really be repelled by garlic.

“It’s been a while, Alex.”

“Indeed. I hope that you’ve been doing well, Phoebe.”

Phoebe was a member of the silver-horned tribe. She had become a temporary member of Alex’s group during the second scholarship trial.

Alex always said he was a Seer, which was simply not true.

Unlike him, Phoebe Amaris was a true Seer. In fact, the Silver-Horned Tribe referred to her as the Seer of the Stars.

“Thank you for telling Renard to join our club instead of joining Obsidian Fang,” Alex said as he pulled a chair out for the young lady to sit on.

“Don’t mention it,” Phoebe replied as she sat down. “I was merely an opportunist who managed to convince him to give his position to me instead.”

Alex sat across the pretty young lady, whom he hadn’t talked to since they had successfully enrolled at the academy.

Since Phoebe also played an important role in the game by giving the Heroes and the Heroines timely counsel, the young man wondered if she was here to give him a few words of caution.

Chapter 326: Oh Sh*t... [Part 2]

“Is something wrong, Phoebe?” Alex prompted. “Don’t tell me that you called me out here just to get my autograph?”

“Oh, I’m here for that too,” Phoebe answered cheekily. “But you’re right. I called you here to tell you something important.”

She paused and allowed her smile to drop. Alex noticed how her long, dark red hair framed her face in an almost ominous way. For a moment, she looked like she belonged in a horror movie.

Then, she narrowed her eyes as she held his gaze.

“The Demon Worshipers will move during the Dungeon Expedition,” Phoebe stated. “They will wait to ambush the students on the Fifth Floor of the dungeon. Their priority is killing Prince Garen and Prince Kaelen.”

Before Alex could process his shock, another question popped up in his mind. “Why are you telling me this? Shouldn’t you share this important information with the Headmaster instead of me?”

Phoebe shook her head. “I can’t tell the Headmaster.”

“Why not?”

“Because I can’t.”

The young man frowned a little, having forgotten that Phoebe only talked to the Heroes and Heroines directly.

However, that still didn’t explain why she was talking to him instead of someone like Renard or Nessia.

“Phoebe, why me?” Alex pressed. “I’m sure there are better people to tell this to, right? How about Renard or Prince Edward?”

Since Renard and Prince Edward were both First Years and Heroes, Alex thought that Phoebe should’ve shared this prophecy with them instead.

This time, it was Phoebe’s turn to frown. “I already sent both of them anonymous letters. But I’m sure they doubt the words written there.”

“I mean, why don’t you meet them in person? Sending anonymous letters will only make you look suspicious in their eyes.”

“I know that.” Phoebe nodded. “But I cannot talk to them directly right now. It’s simply not the right time to do that.”

Alex arched an eyebrow. “Then, why are you meeting me face to face?”

“Because it’s you, Alex Stratos,” Phoebe replied with a cryptic smile.

“Huh?” Alex blinked. “What do you mean by that?”

Phoebe rested her chin on the back of her intertwined hands without breaking eye contact with Alex.

“It’s because you have already fought against the Demon Worshipers,” Phoebe explained. “And you have already thwarted their plans not once but twice. If it has already happened twice, it will happen a third time.”

Alex crossed his arms over his chest. “I still don’t understand. What makes you think that I can stop them?”

Phoebe didn’t respond right away. She simply stared long and hard at Alex’s face, as if trying her best to see through his very soul.

“I don’t really know if you can stop them,” Phoebe admitted. “I just have a gut feeling that once you are informed of their movements, you will be able to plan properly and counter them.”

The young man was very tempted to say, “Well, you’re not wrong,” but he held himself back.

It was hard to deal with Seers because their patrons were none other than the Deities of Arcana.

Phoebe was similar to Celestria, the Saintess of Solara.

They possessed the ability to communicate with their Deities, who shared power and knowledge with their Apostles.

In the end, Alex thanked Phoebe for sharing this important information with him.

He originally planned to take it easy, but if the enemies were truly waiting on the Fifth Floor of the Dungeon, he must find a way to prevent Prince Garen and Prince Kaelen from dying.

If the two Princes died while at Frieden Academy, an international crisis would surely arise. The Kingdom of Avalon would find itself a step away from an all-out war with the Solara and Faelarun Kingdoms.

“One more thing before I go. Do you want me to tell you your fortune?” Phoebe broke out into a mischievous smile like their discussion earlier had been in jest.

“No,” Alex replied without hesitation.

He didn’t want a Seer telling him his fortune because he didn’t want to live in fear of a predestined future.

“That’s quite regrettable,” Phoebe sighed. “But, Alex, remember this. Stay away from Eleanora. She’s more dangerous than you think.”

Alex nodded. “I understand. I will not approach her casually.”

“Good.” Phoebe smiled. The silver horn on her forehead glowed faintly and turned her invisible. “See you next time, Alex.”

A faint, fragrant breeze passed by the young man, leaving him refreshed in its wake.

In the game, Phoebe had the power to turn intangible and pass through solid objects, making her nearly undetectable by normal means.

Alex extended his senses, but felt no trace of the young lady whom he had just been talking to earlier.

‘I guess it’s time to go now,’ Alex thought as he headed toward the door.

Just as his hand was about to reach the handle, the door suddenly swung outward. Alex found himself looking at a beautiful lady with lightly tanned skin.

Under the wall lamps, her shoulder-length hair shimmered like golden silk and her eyes glinted like cursed rubies.

Alex's heart skipped a beat.

But not because he was captivated by her beauty.

No.

His heart skipped because the beauty standing before him was the person Phoebe had just warned him about less than a minute ago!

The two teenagers stared at each other for an indeterminate amount of time before Eleanora's legs decided to stop working and she stumbled into Alex's arms.

'Oh sh*t...' Alex cursed. The potential Mini Boss of the Second or Third Arc was now clinging to him like she needed him for support. Worse, she started to release her pheromones that would make guys lose control of their senses and become captivated by her.

Of course, Alex's resistance against seduction and charm was quite high, so Eleanora's attempt to honeytrap him didn't work.

But he couldn't allow her to know that either!

Just like Phoebe had said, Eleanora was very dangerous. The less she knew about him, the safer he would be. For now, he would pretend that he had fallen under her charm. He couldn't let her suspect anything.

“Are you alright?” Alex asked, doing his best to sound concerned and smitten even though he wanted nothing more than to push her off, sprint back to his room, and disinfect his whole body with alcohol.

“I’m alright,” Eleanora purred as she leaned closer to the young man, fighting the strong urge to sink her fangs into his nape and drink his delicious blood. “I just lost strength in my legs. I’m sorry, but can you carry me inside the old library? There are seats inside.”

Alex’s brain went into overdrive, scrambling to come up with an excuse to avoid spending time alone with the vampire lady—who saw him as little but a tasty snack—without tipping her off that he was able to resist her ability.

Fortunately, Lotte materialized near them. Her arms were crossed and her expression was one that Alex was familiar with.

He’d seen this in soap operas. More specifically, he’d seen this in soap operas when a wife caught her husband cheating on her with a vixen.

“So this is where you are, Alex,” Lotte said brightly, but her smile didn’t reach her eyes. In fact, her gaze was so cold that Alex shuddered like a little rabbit facing an apex predator.

“Lotte, perfect timing!” Alex exclaimed, hoping to convey his innocence with his tone. “This young lady has lost the strength in her legs so she cannot walk on her own. Help me take her to the infirmary!”

“Uh huh,” Lotte sneered because she knew that the beauty in Alex’s arms was just faking her injury. “Are you really hurt, Miss?”

“I-I’m not really hurt,” Eleanora replied. “My legs suddenly felt like they had turned into jelly. Sir Alex just managed to catch me in time.”

“I see,” Lotte said before taking a firm step towards them so she could pull Eleanora from Alex’s embrace. “I’ll take you to the infirmary. You’re a lady, so you shouldn’t approach men so casually. This is especially true for Alex since he already has seven wives.”

""Huh?!""

Eleanora gasped in shock, but Alex gasped louder. This was the first time he was hearing about such a thing.

"You already have seven wives?!" Eleanora asked incredulously, looking at the handsome young man like he was some piece of dogsh*t on the road.

"No!" Alex replied in a heartbeat. "At least, not yet!"

""Yet?""

As Lotte and Eleanora looked at him like he was some kind of scum that should be beaten into pulp, Alex understood how easy it was to get women to unite by sacrificing himself.

"A-Anyway, she's injured, so we should take her to the infirmary," Alex said hastily, hoping to change the subject.

However, he was giving Lotte a thumbs-up inside his heart for her impeccable timing.

If Latifa's Alter hadn't arrived in time, there was a chance that he might have fought Eleanora prematurely, which might have led to his defeat.

Although the vampire lady wasn't as strong as Willow, she was a direct subordinate of the Vampire Lord. If Alex had become their enemy at this point in time, Eleanora would have posed a very serious threat.

Depending on how the story would progress, the Vampire Lord could also become the next Demon Lord of the Demon Realm. The last thing that Alex wanted to happen was for his name to end up on the very top of the Vampire Lord's Kill List.

Chapter 327: I Got Caught By The Crossplay Club

'What a shame...' Eleanora sighed. 'If that girl hadn't come, that boy, Alex Stratos, would already be my slave.'

The young lady then glanced at Chuck's older brother, Caspian, who was reverently kissing her feet.

For a brief moment, she imagined that it was Alex serving her. The corner of her lips rose faintly.

Caspian was certainly a loyal servant, and his blood didn't taste bad. However, she didn't find him as novel as she did Alex. Her encounter with the silver-haired young man had left her blood boiling in excitement—something she hadn't felt for a long time.

Ahh, the thrill of breaking a man who met her standards.

As a Second Year, it was relatively difficult for her to find an opportunity to meet Alex in the open.

Not to mention, she couldn't freely approach him with the persona she decided to use inside the academy—a dull-looking scholarship student who had only gotten into Class A due to her intellect and skills.

Truth be told, Eleanora hated the fact that she had to act timid in front of others. But since she was on a mission, she endured her role to the best of her abilities.

This was why she only showed her true self whenever she was in the old library. It was her way of venting her stress and frustration.

Alex's reputation had earned him the nickname of the Blackmail King. Even the Crest Clubs were now wary of him and his club.

'If I can make him my servant, won't that be pretty exciting?' Eleanora mused, thinking of the many ways she could exploit Alex if he was her loyal minion.

In the end, Eleanora pondered how she could bring Alex inside the old library again and make him fall for her charms.

Suddenly, an idea popped into her head.

“Caspian, your brother and Alex are roommates, right?” Eleanora asked.

Caspian raised his head. “Yes, Mistress.”

“Good.” Eleanora smirked. “I need you to do something for me.”

The young lady told Caspian what to do. For a brief moment, a look of hesitation appeared on the young man’s face.

“Do you plan on making him your subordinate, Mistress?” Caspian asked. “You don’t need to do that. I alone will do your bidding. I will obey all your commands.”

“Caspian, you’re my favorite,” Eleanora cooed, tracing Caspian’s cheek with a fingernail that was all too sharp. Despite the sweetness of her voice, the young man shuddered.

“However, whether you can retain that status depends on how useful you are. I need you to bring your brother here in three days. I don’t care what methods you use, but he must be here after classes. Do I make myself clear?”

Caspian shuddered a second time as Eleanora’s hand moved down to his neck. Her caresses told him that it was time for her to feed on his blood, so he rose up and loosened his uniform, inviting the young lady to bite his neck.

“Good boy.” Eleanora smiled sweetly. “As long as you obey, you will always be my favorite.”

A second later, she slowly sank her fangs into his neck and began feeding on his mana-rich blood, draining a bit of his vitality in the process.

Inside Alex's room in the Ironheart Dormitory...

After leaving the old library and parting ways with Lotte, Alex returned to his room to organize his thoughts.

Too many things had happened one after another. It made him feel like something was amiss, so he decided to review them properly with a calm and critical eye.

"First and foremost, Phoebe's role is to give the Heroes and Heroines advice on opportune moments," Alex muttered as he wrote this information in his notebook. "She's the Third Daughter of the Chieftain of the Silver-Horn Tribe and also their Seer."

After writing those things down, Alex drew an arrow and added the day's date.

'Of all the places where we can talk, why did she pick the Old Library?' Alex wondered as he circled the words "Old Library" in his notebook.

'Also, she knew about Eleanora and even called her a vampire, which means she knew that the old library was Eleanora's feeding ground.'

She had also warned Alex that Eleanora was dangerous before taking her leave.

Now, here came the tricky part.

As soon as Phoebe left, Eleanora appeared in the old library.

Coincidence?

Alex would be a fool to think so.

'She set me up to meet with Eleanora.' Alex's face became solemn after coming to this conclusion. 'Just what is she thinking?'

If not for Lotte's timely appearance, he'd be facing one of two troublesome outcomes.

The first possibility was that he would've had to physically fight against Eleanora. While the vampire lady's martial skills weren't outstanding, her proficiency in magic was nothing to scoff at.

Frankly, magic casters were difficult opponents for Alex since his passive reflect skills didn't work on magical attacks.

Of course, he was confident about enduring long enough until help arrived.

A battle inside the old library was bound to catch attention, so he believed that Eleanora wouldn't have chosen this option unless she really had no other choice.

Now came the second possible outcome—Alex playing along with her while waiting for an opportunity to escape.

While it was risky, he was confident that Eleanora wouldn't have dared to harm him during their first meeting.

'Still, why did Phoebe do that?' Alex drew an arrow beside Phoebe's name. 'What is her goal?'

No matter how much he thought about it, he just couldn't understand why the Seer of the Silver-Horn Tribe had put him in such a sticky situation.

In the end, Alex decided that it would be best if he spoke to Phoebe directly and demanded an explanation. While she might not tell him the truth, that was still better than going in circles with what little information he currently had.

At that moment, Chuck entered the room, looking haggard.

But what Alex first noticed was the fact that there were kiss marks on Chuck's cheeks, forehead, and neck.

"Dude, what happened?" Alex asked as he did a quick count. His roommate had been kissed at least eight times and, judging by the different lipstick colors, by no fewer than three women!

"I got caught by the Crossplay Club..." Chuck collapsed on his bed face-first, muffling his groan with the pillow.

Alex blinked. "...The what now?"

Chuck rolled over, revealing even more kiss marks on the side of neck. "The Crossplay Club," he said simply.

"I heard you the first time. What about the Crossplay Club?"

"You know, that group of cute ladies that dress up in cute costumes like magical girls during Academy Festivals? They were hanging out in a cafe near the eastern outskirts of the academy, which no one usually visits."

The troublemaker then sighed like he was about to recount a tragedy.

"I decided to visit that cafe when I heard that a lot of cute ladies were gathering there. I wanted to ask them for advice on how to deal with relationships. Before I knew it, they conscripted me as a test subject to practice kissing."

"Are you bragging right now?" Alex asked, not even bothering to hide his envy. If he could, he would smack his roommate into oblivion!

Chuck didn't reply.

He didn't have to.

The smug look on his face said it all even as he continued acting as if he was some kind of victim!

Of course, Alex didn't know the real story behind this kissing incident.

Chuck wasn't really good when it came to talking to ladies, especially ladies he didn't know.

He had really been trying to look for advice about relationships, so he had manned up and gone there by himself.

In order to boost his courage, he had drunk his Conqueror's Potion and gone ahead with the YOLO attitude.

However, with his dashing and confident self, he hadn't been able to stop himself from talking to the girls who, in turn, had become enamored with his suaveness.

"Don't worry, Alex," Chuck said as he patted the shoulder of his roommate. "When the time comes and you need a wingman, you can rely on this Love Expert. I'll make sure to play the perfect matchmaker!"

The teenage boy then started to brag more about what had happened in the cafe, not knowing that he had become the target of a dangerous vampire lady who wanted to use him to get closer to Alex.

Alex had no desire to continue hearing about Chuck's adventure, so he left the room to look for Phoebe.

However, it was like she already knew of his intention. To Alex's chagrin, the young redhead was nowhere to be found in the Ironheart Dormitory

Since this was rather important, he decided to ask Phoebe's roommate to let her know that he wanted to have a proper talk to her within the next few days.

There was little else that he could do.

Without knowing if he would get a reply or not, Alex decided to return to his room and endure another round of Chuck's humble bragging.

Chapter 328: Ignorance Will Kill You Faster Than Any Monster's Claws.

"Over six hundred years ago, the capital city of the kingdom of magic suddenly vanished without a trace overnight," said the History Professor, Professor Arabelle, in a solemn tone.

"This capital city was called Orion City. No one really knows what happened back then. However, a year after the city's disappearance, something appeared within its ruins. Can anyone here answer what that is?"

The Homeroom Professor of Class C glanced at Alex, who was raising his hand.

"Yes, Alex?"

"A Dungeon appeared in the ruins of Orion City."

"Correct." Professor Arabelle nodded with satisfaction. "Twenty Academy Points to Mr. Stratos."

The Professor then tapped the end of her staff against the marble floor.

A low thrum reverberated through the classroom while a ripple of light spread outward from the point of contact.

In an instant, the air above her shimmered, warping like glass under heat until a magical projection bloomed into existence.

A prosperous city appeared. Its center—where a city square should have been—was walled-off. Above the massive walls were countless magical cannons, each pointed inwards at the entrance of a dungeon.

“The city has been rebuilt and has retained its original name,” Professor Arabelle explained. “And the Dungeon is called the Orion Dungeon.”

She paused for a bit before continuing.

“This Dungeon is one of the three Rank S Dungeons in the Kingdom of Avalon. So, who here knows what kind of monsters spawn inside of it?”

“Me!” Chuck waved his hand frantically, trying to catch the Professor’s attention.

Professor Arabelle smiled faintly and nodded in Chuck’s direction.

“The monsters that spawn inside the Orion Dungeon are Undead Monsters,” Chuck answered.

“Correct. Five points to Mr. No Rizz,” Professor Arabelle declared. “Just like what Mr. No Rizz has said, the Orion Dungeon is a dungeon where Undead Monsters spawn. It’s also regularly monitored by the Knights of Orion to ensure that a Dungeon Outbreak will be detected as early as possible.

“It’s been a hundred years since the last Outbreak and the likelihood of it happening again increases every day.”

Alex lowered his head, thinking. A Dungeon Outbreak was long overdue, but there was no way of knowing exactly when it would happen. No way, of course, except by letting Charles set foot inside the dungeon.

Once he did, a Dungeon Outbreak was guaranteed.

That was exactly the leverage Alex planned to use to win the competition.

A Dungeon Outbreak would eliminate the other teams by forcing them to use their teleportation crystals to escape the horde of monsters.

While the students were escaping, Alex would seize this opportunity to eliminate as many monsters as he could, turning the dungeon into his slaughter zone.

He, Nessia, Charles, Vaan, and Dim Dim had been preparing hard for this expedition. They believed that once the tide of monsters rolled out in full, they would gain a massive amount of points in the process.

Of course, with Professor Rowan on the scene, the safety of the city was not a problem.

In the game, the Monster Outbreak would take place a year from now and nearly destroy the entire City of Orion in the process.

Alex didn't want that to happen, so he decided to use this opportunity to induce an artificial Dungeon Outbreak. That would empty the monster reserves in the dungeon and prevent an outbreak from happening in the near future.

In his mind, this was the perfect plan that prevented future problems.

Also, since Phoebe had given him a warning, he now knew that the Demon Worshipers would be waiting to ambush the students on the Fifth Floor.

Their primary targets were Prince Garen of Solara and Prince Kaelen of Faelarun.

Alex didn't know how many Demon Worshipers would be entering the dungeon, but they, too, would be drowned by the waves of monsters that would rise to the surface.

Charles had also spoken privately with him, admitting that his Challenger's Mark had evolved into a stronger skill.

He hadn't given Alex the full details of the upgrade, but he had revealed something chilling.

The Challenger's Mark range now extended up to six kilometers inside a dungeon.

The skill had always had a spherical range, which meant that it affected floors both above and below Charles. Now that his reach had been extended to six kilometers, Alex didn't know how many dungeon floors would be affected by Charles' Dungeon-Wide taunt ability.

Either way, a Monster Outbreak was guaranteed to happen. On the bright side, it would also endanger the Demon Worshipers, who were after the VIPs from Solara and Faelarun.

"Undead Monsters have many weaknesses and resistances." Professor Arabelle's soothing voice snapped Alex from his thoughts, forcing him to focus on the lesson.

"But let us talk about their strengths first."

The magical projection shifted into a skeletal warrior shrugging off a volley of poisoned arrows, a zombie continuing to march even after its leg had been severed, and a banshee unleashing a scream that shattered the will of veteran soldiers.

"Undead Monsters are immune to poison and disease. They do not suffer fatigue, nor do they feel fear or pain. A wound that would cripple a living soldier does not hinder them in the slightest.

"Even when destroyed, certain Undead possess the ability to reform or evolve into stronger versions of themselves."

The students shifted uncomfortably in their seats.

"Furthermore," Professor Arabelle continued as she tapped her staff once more, "their numbers are virtually limitless during an Outbreak.

"Undead do not need food or rest. They will hurl themselves against city walls without hesitation, wearing down defenders until exhaustion and despair claim them. Some, such as Wraiths and Banshees, can bypass physical defenses entirely."

The projection morphed again, now displaying a list with glowing words that floated above the battlefield illusions.

Advantages of Undead Monsters

- Immunity to poison and disease.
- No fatigue, fear, or pain.
- Capable of fighting even with crippling injuries.
- Some can reform or evolve after destruction.
- Numbers can swell endlessly during an Outbreak.
- Certain types can bypass physical defenses (specters, banshees, wraiths).

“However, the Undead are not without weaknesses,” Professor Arabelle said firmly. She had picked up on the uncertainty her students were feeling. “They are especially vulnerable to holy and divine magic as well as purification rites. Fire is also an effective weapon, particularly against the lesser Undead.

“And while they may feel no fear, Low-Ranking Undead, like Skeleton Soldiers, Zombies, and Ghouls, are often slow, predictable, and reliant on overwhelming numbers rather than cunning.”

The glowing letters rearranged themselves into a second list.

Weaknesses of Undead Monsters

- Vulnerable to holy and divine magic.
- Weak against purification and blessings.

- Fire is highly effective, especially against Low-Ranking Undead.
- The movements of Low-Ranking Undead are often slow and predictable.
- Lower intelligence compared to other monster types.
- Dependent on necrotic energy—disruption of this energy weakens them.

The projection dimmed and Professor Arabelle's voice softened.

"Knowledge of your enemy is your first shield. In Orion Dungeon, ignorance will kill you faster than any monster's claws."

Her words hung in the air, and the classroom remained silent.

"But know this, High-Ranking Undead like Vampires are very dangerous," Professor Arabella stated.

"Among the High-Ranking Undead that have been recorded are Dullahans, headless knights who wield cursed blades and ride spectral warhorses. Their strikes can sever not only flesh, but also the very spirit of their opponent."

Several students gasped as the image of a towering, headless rider appeared on the projection, its sword dripping with black flame.

"Then there are the Death Knights—fallen heroes resurrected by necrotic energy. Unlike their mindless counterparts, Death Knights retain fragments of their martial skill, making them tactically intelligent and extremely difficult to defeat. Entire squads of adventurers have perished facing a single one."

The projection shifted again, showing a knight clad in blackened steel, its eyes glowing crimson beneath a rusted helm.

“And deeper still dwell the Liches—Undead sorcerers of immense magical power. A Lich does not simply kill with claws or steel. They summon legions of Undead and drain the life force of an entire battlefield. Fortunately, only one has ever been sighted within Orion Dungeon and that was nearly two centuries ago.”

The students’ unease only intensified as the vision of a skeletal mage raised its staff and sent a green wave of death washing over screaming soldiers.

“And finally,” Professor Arabelle lowered her voice, her expression grave, “there are whispers of something greater... the Bone Colossi—towering monstrosities assembled from thousands of bones, bound together by dark rituals.

“They are not common spawns, but rather guardians that awaken only when the balance of the Dungeon is disturbed. Even the Knights of Orion dare not engage one lightly.”

A gigantic skeleton over a hundred meters tall appeared in the projection. With a single slash of its bony sword, it destroyed everything in its path.

“There is also the Bone Dragon, which is just as strong as the Bone Colossi, perhaps even stronger,” Professor Arabelle added.

The Headmaster hadn’t told anyone where he planned to take the First Years for their Dungeon Expedition.

But Professor Arabelle had a hunch.

Because of this, she decided to teach her class about Orion Dungeon, hoping they would be able to connect the dots and make adequate preparations.

Alex, who realized what Professor Arabelle was thinking, couldn’t help but give his Professor a thumbs-up in his heart.

Given her dedication and care for her students, it was not surprising that she was one of the most popular Professors among the First Years.

'While I don't believe we will be facing a Bone Dragon, a Bone Colossi, or a Lich, fighting against Dullahans and Death Knights is possible,' Alex thought. 'I just hope that our preparations will be enough to face those High-Ranking Undeads.'

There were only a few weeks before the promised date, so Alex decided to drop by the Exchange Center later to buy more materials for the talismans.

He would also visit the outskirts of the City of Harmonia to purchase some artifacts that were effective against Undead Monsters.

The young man hadn't forgotten that he was in "Hell Mode." He decided to play it safe and add more protective measures that would ensure his club members' safety in their upcoming dungeon expedition.

Chapter 329: Interview With A Vampire [Part 1]

"What do you want?" Chuck asked.

"Come to the Old Library after classes tomorrow," Caspian replied. "I need to tell you something important."

"Can't you tell me now?"

"This is not the place to talk about it."

Chuck frowned. His brother hadn't invited him into a private conversation for a long time. Not to mention, the venue would be the Old Library, a place rarely visited by the students.

It was strange enough that Caspian wanted to meet him at an isolated location, but as the brothers had never had a good relationship, Chuck felt that something wasn't right.

"You don't need to worry," Caspian said after seeing the frown on his brother's face. "I don't plan to do anything to you. There is someone I need you to meet. It will only be the three of us and no one else."

"And what if I refuse?" Chuck inquired.

"You'll regret it," Caspian answered before turning around to walk away. "Remember, go there alone after classes or else."

Chuck watched his brother leave without leaving his spot. He had noticed that Caspian's face had a sickly pallor, but since they weren't close, he had decided to ignore it and simply listen to what his brother had to say.

'I don't think he's lying about wanting to talk,' Chuck thought. 'But I'm very curious about the identity of the person who wants to meet me.'

He knew how arrogant and prideful his brother was. If Caspian was willing to become a person's messenger, it only meant one thing.

That person must be really important. Perhaps they even held a high position within the kingdom.

A few names came to mind, the first being Prince Edward, who was part of the Lionheart Society.

'Well, I guess I'll find out tomorrow,' Chuck mused. 'But it will be best to be prepared for any unexpected situation.'

The next day...

"Dim Dim, if I'm not back within the day, tell Alex that I went to the Old Library to meet my brother," Chuck said to the little bun, who looked back at him with concern.

"Dim?"

“You can’t go with me. My brother said that I can’t take anyone with me.”

“Dim Dim!”

“Well... you do have a point.”

Chuck scratched his head. While he had been told to go alone, surely his brother had other people rather than sentient buns in mind when saying that.

Since Dim Dim looked like a harmless bun, Chuck thought that it might be fine to bring it along.

Also, he was a little nervous about facing his brother on his own, so having Dim Dim accompany him might be a good idea.

After coming to an agreement, Chuck decided to write a letter and place it on Alex’s desk inside their room.

Since Dim Dim was coming with him, it would be best to leave a message, just in case something happened to them.

The young man then attended his classes like he usually did while Dim Dim patrolled the academy with Daisy and Rex.

Both of them met up again at the end of the school day to head to the old library together.

Dim Dim was perched on top of Chuck’s head and paying close attention to their surroundings.

When they were nearing their destination, Chuck took out two Conqueror’s Heart Potions and handed one to Dim Dim.

“Bottoms up!”

“Dim!”

The two drank everything inside the bottles, enjoying the potion’s exquisite taste.

A few seconds later, both of their gazes sharpened. Chuck stood up straighter, while Dim Dim took out its gangster sunglasses to wear.

“Well then, let’s see what this is all about,” Chuck said with confidence as he approached the door of the old library.

He didn’t even bat an eye as he entered the dimly-lit room, where his brother was already waiting for him.

“So you’ve come,” Caspian said with satisfaction.

“I still have things to do, so out with it,” Chuck replied, his magical senses spreading out in the room, ready to react to any unusual developments.

“Oh my, you’re so impatient.”

A voice filled with amusement reached Chuck’s ears. He glanced to one of the bookshelves to his right.

From the shadows, a young lady with a light tan and long blonde hair emerged from the shadows.

She practically glided toward Chuck with a sweet smile plastered on her beautiful face.

“Well met, Mr. Chuck No Rizz,” Eleanora greeted. “I have long wanted to talk to you in private.”

When she was only a foot away from the young man, her eyes glowed faintly as she studied him.

Eleanora had heard many things about Chuck from Caspian, and all of them made her think that he was a timid and cowardly person.

But as she gazed at his eyes, the only thing she could see was a young man that was oozing with confidence.

He met her gaze calmly and held it.

The first one to flinch and look away was Eleanora.

'My charm is not working on him,' Eleanora realized. She intensified the power in her eyes while releasing an enchanting scent that bewitched the opposite sex.

Suddenly, a faint smile appeared on Chuck's face. "Now what do we have here? A little vampire or a succubi? Either way, you are a hundred years too young to charm someone as devilishly handsome as me."

As Eleanora was left wordless, Chuck turned his attention to his brother. Caspian's eyes were glazed over. He stared blankly into nothingness, seemingly frozen in place.

"I see... so that's it." Chuck rubbed his chin thoughtfully, not even bothering to acknowledge Eleanora's look of disbelief.

"I suppose you charmed my brother with the intention of charming me as well. It's not a bad plan, but you seem to have underestimated me quite a bit. So, what do you want, Ms. Vampire? Do you want to suck my blood?"

"Hmph!" Dim Dim scoffed. "Peasant!"

The young man's dismissiveness and the little bun's ridicule wiped the smile from Eleanora's face.

"I guess my powers don't work on idiots," Eleanora retorted before snapping her fingers.

A magical formation covering the entirety of the Old Library manifested under her feet.

She had wanted to make Chuck her subordinate peacefully. However, since her power didn't work on him, she could only resort to Plan B.

She would make him submit by force!

However, since any battle in the Old Library would be felt by others, she had made preparations beforehand, allowing her to create a domain that trapped Chuck and Dim Dim inside. It would only last several minutes, but that should be enough.

"A third-rate domain?" Chuck asked in a mocking tone. "That must mean that you're just a third-rate Vampire then."

Perhaps he finally hit a nerve, because Eleanora snapped her fingers with way too much force.

"Beat him up, Caspian!" Eleanora ordered while she leaped back, spread her wings, and flew off.

"Die, Half-Blood!" Caspian roared in anger as he unleashed his inner desire.

Countless Fire Bullets rained down on Chuck, but he seemed unperturbed.

As the Fire Bullets approached him, six flaming whips materialized around him and started to disperse them.

"Dim Dim?"

"Okay. You deal with my brother, I'll deal with the vampire."

“Dim!”

Dim Dim jumped off Chuck’s head, while the latter focused his attention on Eleanora, who had landed on top of a bookshelf.

“I know that I am incredibly attractive and have many fans in the academy,” Chuck said in a matter-of-fact tone. “Since you are one of my fans, how about we both take a step back, and I give you my autograph as a prize?”

“It seems that narcissism runs in the Rizz Family.” Eleanora sneered. “But soon, you will be kneeling and licking my feet in servitude!”

“Lick your feet?” Chuck arched an eyebrow. “O,h please! That’s very unhygienic. But I don’t mind if you lick my feet. After all, there’s no dirty spot on my body.”

Eleanora laughed mirthlessly before releasing her true power.

A powerful magical pressure descended upon Chuck as the young lady revealed her true rank.

“Rank 4.” Chuck’s smile did not change one bit. “It seems that I need to take things a little seriously.”

“You have two options,” Eleanora announced. “Become my servant willingly like your brother or become my servant after I beat you up. The choice is yours.”

“I’ll take the third option,” Chuck replied fearlessly. “I’ll make you my servant after I give you a good spanking.”

“Delusional fool,” Eleanora hissed.

“Third-rate bloodsucker,” Chuck countered. “Oh right. You’re a vampire, so you may only look young. In reality, you must be a three-hundred year old hag, right?”

The young lady's face twisted as dark swirls of magical energy formed around her.

"I'll kill you!" Eleanora shrieked as she unleashed dozens of Dark Spears with the intention of turning Chuck into a pin cushion.

Instead of being afraid, Chuck grinned fearlessly because his opponent had made a terrible mistake in picking a fight with him.

Chapter 330: Interview With A Vampire [Part 2]

"Dim!"

"Stop moving, you evil little creature!"

"Dim!"

"Arghhh!"

Dim Dim, who was dealing with Caspian, jumped high in the air and hurled a brittle vial at the pathetic young man.

Caspian, frustrated by his inability to even land one hit on his opponent, decided to unleash a more powerful spell.

"Fireball!"

The brittle vial and the Fireball collided, but the ending Caspian visualized didn't happen.

He thought the Fireball would swallow the brittle vial and continue its trajectory until it hit Dim Dim, who had been bouncing like a ping pong ball on the shields it had summoned.

But the universe really cared very little for what Caspian wanted. When the brittle vial and the fireball collided, a blinding light washed over the dark domain, forcing even Chuck and Eleanora to cover their eyes.

The brittle vial was filled with Sun Stone Powder, a substance that, like gunpowder, was easily ignited.

It also had explosive properties, so instead of being overwhelmed by the Fireball, it simply blew up and dispersed Caspian's attack while releasing a bright flash of light that would be very effective against Undead Monsters.

Caspian cried out in pain, momentarily blinded by the light.

However, Dim Dim was unaffected because it was wearing its gangster sunglasses.

"Ei!" Dim Dim shouted as it smacked the side of Caspian's face with a Toy Hammer it had bought from the Arcana Shop, eliciting a groan from the young man.

However, Dim Dim wasn't done just yet. Oh, no.

With a speed that it rarely demonstrated except when fleeing from Alex's singing, the little bun unleashed its limit break, Fated Circle (like the game Final F*ntasy VIII).

"Ei!"

"Ei!"

"Ei!"

"Ei!"

Dim Dim repeatedly smacked Caspian's body from head to foot before finally unleashing an uppercut with its Toy Hammer that sent the young man flying.

The little bun watched as Caspian fell down and lost consciousness before using its stubby hand to fix its gangster sunglasses on its face like a boss.

"So useless!" Eleanora muttered in annoyance when she saw that her servant wasn't even able to defeat the little bun who was always perched on top of Alex's head!

However, even though she called Caspian useless, she was also having a hard time dealing with someone that was two ranks weaker than her!

Chuck was only a Rank 2 Fire Mage, but somehow she, a Rank 4 Blood Reaver, was not wiping the floor with him!

She was more powerful if she'd drunk enough blood beforehand or if she was fighting on a battlefield covered in blood.

Simply put, she shone more in large-scale battles rather than one-on-one fights.

But even if that hadn't been the case, she could have easily beaten Chuck due to the difference in their Ranks.

At least, that was how it should have been.

Unfortunately, the young man not only countered her attacks, he even gained the upper hand!

"Have you heard about the Kingdom of Azgral?" Chuck asked in a very relaxed tone, sounding like a Professor lecturing a student about history.

"No," Eleanora replied as she summoned two swords made up of blood in each of her hands. "It must have been a pathetic kingdom if I have never heard of it."

“Well, it doesn’t matter.” Chuck grinned, not minding the young lady’s barbed word. “All you need to know is that there was a man in that kingdom who went by the name Lord Gilgamesh.

“He was very timid when it came to socializing with the nobles and addressing concerns in the throneroom. However, he was the strongest Fire Sorcerer of the Azgral Kingdom.”

Chuck spoke about Lord Gilgamesh fondly, as if recalling someone very dear to his heart.

“And what of it?” Eleanora said disdainfully. “Don’t tell me you plan to win by boring me to death with your story.”

“Lord Gilgamesh’ story is never boring,” Chuck insisted as he eyed the vampire, who had already conjured twenty Blood Swords. They hovered around her, but every tip was already pointed in Chuck’s direction. “He might have been timid when it came to social gatherings, but there was one thing that made him feared by his enemies. Do you know what that thing was?”

“I’m not interested!” Eleanora shouted as she lunged at Chuck, her twin blades ready to strike.

The floating swords around her also shot towards the young man like heat-seeking missiles that had locked onto their target.

“What an impatient girl.” Chuck chuckled as he waved his hand casually.

Dozens of flame whips materialized around him, grabbing hold of the flying bloodswords and keeping them in place.

Eleanora tried to slash through these whips, but they were stronger than she expected. Her blades were simply unable to cut through them.

In fact, the fire whips had even wrapped around the swords she was wielding! Try as she might, she couldn’t free them from the whips.

Out of self-preservation, she decided to let them go and back away to safety.

“You should really listen when people are talking.” Chuck sighed. “Aren’t you curious why I am able to overpower you despite the difference in ranks?”

This question had been nagging at the back of Eleanora’s mind ever since they started fighting.

None of her abilities worked against his flaming whips, which seemed to have a life of their own.

To her frustration, it was as if the whips themselves were resistant against anything she threw at Chuck.

Seeing Eleanora’s frustration, Chuck only laughed. The sound grated on her nerves.

“The answer is really simple, my dear,” Chuck said. “It’s because the flames used are not made from regular flames.

With a snap of his fingers, the flames of the whips around him changed their colors.

One moment they were red-orange, and the very next they were silver.

The moment Eleanora saw this, her body shuddered as her eyes widened in shock.

“Impossible!” Eleanora muttered.

“To see is to believe,” Chuck stated. “Now you understand, right? Let’s go back to Lord Gilgamesh. He was only a Rank 7 Fire Sorcerer, but he was feared by many, including Werewolves and Vampires.

“Even Rank 8 and Rank 9 Demons were afraid of fighting him directly, so they left the Azgral Kingdom alone.

“Unfortunately, the Kingdom still fell—not because it was invaded by monsters, but because of its corrupted officials. It’s a real pity, but humans are more dangerous than monsters sometimes.”

Eleanora’s heart was beating wildly inside her chest because she now understood why she couldn’t overpower Chuck no matter what.

She had wanted to make him her servant so that she could get close to Alex and make him her servant as well.

Unfortunately, she hadn’t expected that the sheep was actually a wolf, and it was now looking at her as if she was his prey.

‘No, I must run!’ Eleanora thought as she hurriedly canceled the Domain in order to flee.

She needed to get away from Chuck before it was too late.

Unfortunately, it was already too late.

In an act of desperation, Eleanora unleashed in Chuck’s direction a barrage of blood swords, blood spears, and blood axes.

She then flew towards the door of the Old Library in order to leave as fast as she could.

But just as her hand was about to touch the door knob, it froze. The knob was almost within reach, but now, it would stay out of her reach forever.

“Leaving so soon?” Chuck asked in a teasing tone. “You invited me here, but instead of serving me tea, you decided to charm me. When that didn’t work, you resorted to violence. How typical of vampires...”

Eleanora could only look on in horror. Her blood weapons were all held in place by flames made of silver that had transformed into whips and chains.

Those very same chains had also latched onto her body, preventing her from moving.

“No! Stay away!” Eleanora screamed. “Someone help me! Save meeeeeeeeeeeee!”

Due to her panic, she forgot that she had imbued the Old Library with a soundproofing spell that would prevent anyone from hearing whatever was happening inside.

Earlier in the fight, she had had some doubts. However, now that she was bound by the silver flames, she knew for certain that Chuck was the bane of her existence!

And not just her but all Vampires and Werewolves as well!

Even if they were stronger than Chuck, even if they had overwhelming power, the moment they faced him in the battlefield, they would be like children trying to fight an adult.

“What were you saying earlier?” Chuck asked playfully. “Ah, right. You said I had two options. The first was to become your servant willingly, and the second was to become your servant after you beat me up.”

A chuckle escaped the young man’s lips as he commanded the chains made from silver flames to pull Eleanora’s body back and press her head against the floor. As a result, her hips were raised high in an embarrassing position.

Chuck raised his hand and the crisp sound of someone’s backside being spanked echoed inside the library.

“Bad girls should be punished.” Chuck’s voice became cold and humorless. “Especially a girl who manipulated a member of my family. I might not get along with my brother, and we often get into fights and arguments, but we still share the same blood. How dare you use him as your pawn?”

A pained cry escaped Eleanora’s lips as Chuck spanked her a second time.

The young man even made sure to cover his hand in silver flame so that his spans really hurt.

He spanked her repeatedly. Eleanora begged and pleaded with him to stop, but Chuck was relentless.

Vampires and Werewolves were weak against silver weapons, but silver flames truly struck fear in their hearts because they were twice as effective against them!

“Ah, where was I again?” Chuck momentarily paused his disciplining of the vampire girl, whose entire body had slackened. Drool seeped at the corner of her lips, and tears streamed down her eyes.

“Ah, right. Lord Gilgamesh was an amazing person. He gained a famous title when he was still in active service. Do you know what that was?”

Eleanora had regained some of her senses. She gritted her teeth as she remembered the historical figure she had forgotten about.

“Vampire Conqueror Gilgamesh,” Chuck said softly, making Eleanora shudder.

“Although he also hunted Werewolves, he hunted more Vampires during his lifetime. And you know what? I am his successor. So, Ms. Vampire, I hope you and I will have a wonderful relationship from this day onward, okay?”

Eleanora had never regretted anything in her life. But now she was regretting her decision of targeting Chuck because she’d thought he was a pushover.

If she only had known what he really was like, she wouldn’t have dared to even touch Caspian! Alas, she was now facing someone who could literally bring down the Vampire and Werewolf races to their knees once he was given enough time to master his powers.