

Endless 391

Chapter 391: Unexpected Reunion [Part 1]

“Bloodsuckers?” Alex blinked. “You mean... Thralls or Vampires?”

“I don’t know,” Lumi replied. “All I know is they’re at least Rank 3. They’re quite literally fighting tooth and nail with the Goblins.”

As soon as Lumi gave a description of the “humans” who were fighting against the Goblins, the image of a young lady appeared inside Alex’s head.

‘Did Eleanora send them?’ Alex thought as he rested his chin on his hand. ‘If so, then that explains it.’

Although there were many factions among the Demon Worshipers, the bloodsucking ones generally fell under the direct command of the Vampire Lord whom Eleanora served.

‘But I didn’t mess with the subordinates of the Vampire Lord,’ Alex mused. ‘Is this just a coincidence?’

Alex was more inclined to believe that this was no coincidence. Since Eleanora was a spy of the Demon Worshipers, there was a possibility that she had informed her superior about Alex’s mission.

He never thought for a moment that the one that sent them might be Evangeline. Although she was the daughter of the Vampire Lord, Alex sensed that she meant him no harm.

After careful consideration, Alex told Lumi to continue watching the battle, but she mustn’t interfere no matter what.

“They might be part of the Demon Worshipers,” Alex noted seriously. “I don’t know what they’re doing here, but it’s best that we stay out of their way.”

Alex then briefly straightened his finger so it went over his lips, as if telling Lumi not to mention anything about their involvement with the Demon Worshipers.

Fortunately, she was smart enough to understand this hint.

'Could they be here because of Alex?' Lumi thought. 'Should I help the Goblins kill them?'

If what Alex said was true, then letting the Demon Worshipers die at the hands of the Goblins was a good option.

Perhaps reading her mind, Alex grabbed her hand and shook his head.

"Do not interfere," Alex stated. "Do you understand, Lumi?"

The intensity of his gaze made Lumi realize that Alex truly didn't want her to take part in the ongoing battle.

"Very well." Lumi nodded. "I will just observe and inform you of any relevant developments."

"Good." Alex finally let go of her hand, allowing her to observe the battle from a safe location.

Once Lumi had left the cave, Alex shifted his attention back to his map.

It was then that he noticed a Red Dot—that was at least five times bigger than the normal dots—moving toward the battle.

Curious, he tried to tap the blinking dot, not really expecting anything to happen.

To his surprise, a label appeared under the big red dot, showing its name.

[Goblin Warlord (Rank 5 Field Boss)]

After Alex increased his rank, some of his other basic system functions also got an upgrade.

His map was one of them, and it could now show the exact strength of the Field Boss Monster.

He watched as the Field Boss clashed with the twelve yellow dots, breaking their formation.

One of those twelve yellow dots disappeared, leaving only eleven behind.

'One down,' Alex thought as he cheered for the Field Boss Monster to eliminate his foes.

However, he greatly overestimated the courage of the Demon Worshipers.

As soon as the Goblin Warlord joined the battle and killed one of their people, the Demon Worshipers chose to retreat without hesitation.

This development made Alex click his tongue and mutter something about cowards who were all bark and no bite under his breath.

Still, he saw dozens of red dots pursue their fleeing enemies, leaving him rather hopeful.

Even the Goblin Warlord followed behind them. Alex gave it a thumbs-up in his heart for being diligent and thorough!

Just as he was about to cheer the goblins, he suddenly came to a realization.

The Demon Worshipers were running in the direction of Oak Village!

"Sh*t!" Alex cursed because this was the worst-case scenario.

"What happened?" Mark asked.

He couldn't see Alex's expression since it was dark inside the cave, but he felt that something must have happened for the young man to curse out loud.

"The Demon Worshipers are leading the Goblins to the village!" Alex replied.

"What?!" Mark gasped in shock. "Damn them! Wait, what Demon Worshipers?"

"They're the humans we heard screaming," Alex explained.

As he was speaking, Mark took out a brighter fluorescent crystal from his storage ring, lighting the interior of the cave.

"We have to warn the villagers!" Mark said anxiously.

"Okay." Alex agreed. "You warn them. I will distract the Goblins."

"Y-You will do what?" Mark looked at the young man in disbelief.

"Someone needs to distract the Goblins to halt their advance for the time being," Alex stated. "This is the only way that we can buy time for the villagers to prepare. Now go! Lumi and Dim Dim will help me."

Alex didn't even wait for Mark to respond before heading straight to where the Goblins were congregated.

"Dim Dim, cause as much trouble as you want," Alex ordered. "But make sure that you won't endanger yourself, okay?"

"Dim!" Dim Dim nodded before jumping towards a tree branch and advancing faster than Alex was running.

Lumi had placed a tracking spell on Alex's body, allowing her to know where he was at all times.

When she sensed that Alex had left the cave, she immediately went to his location to ask what he was doing.

“The Demon Worshipers are leading the Goblins to the village!” Alex exclaimed as soon as Lumi materialized beside him. “We have to distract them before it’s too late. Dim Dim has already gone ahead to catch their attention.”

“You can leave the distraction to me and Dim Dim,” Lumi pointed out. “Both of us can escape on our own. You will focus on reaching the village to warn them of the danger!”

Alex didn’t argue with Lumi, understanding this was the best option they had right now.

Lumi and Dim Dim could run away if they needed, while Alex would be in great danger once he was surrounded.

In the end, he decided to catch up to Mark, who still hadn’t gone far according to his trusty map.

The sound of explosions reached him the moment he saw his comrade.

He watched as two green dots clashed with the rear of the Goblin Army, scattering their formation.

Wanting to see how far the village was from the Monster Army, Alex zoomed out of the map.

Suddenly, he saw something that made his eyes widen in shock.

Three green dots were approaching the Goblin Army from the east. However, that wasn’t the thing that shocked Alex.

What shocked him was that these three green dots had names in them, which made Alex change his course.

“Mark, head to the village without me and warn them!” Alex said as he ran toward the east.

“Where are you going?!” Mark asked.

“My friends are fighting,” Alex replied. “I need to help them!”

Without another word, Alex ran as fast as he could.

He didn’t expect to see familiar names in his map, but that didn’t stop him from sprinting towards them without a second thought.

If he could reunite with them, then there was a possibility that they could deal with the Goblins and the Goblin Warlord before those monsters reached Oak Village.

“Get out of my way!” Alex roared as he used his Shield Charge to bulldoze the Goblins blocking his path.

Time was ticking. The sooner he reunited with his friends, the sooner they could launch a counter-attack against the Goblins threatening the small village he wanted to protect no matter what.

Chapter 392: Unexpected Reunion [Part 2]

Alex wondered if his eyes were tricking him.

Originally, he had planned to rush to the village with Mark and warn the villagers about the incoming threat, but he had quickly changed plans upon seeing those three green dots.

Regardless of everything, he must come to them.

Since Goblins had congregated in this area, the young man had no choice but to force his way through and bulldoze through the monsters with brute force.

He didn't even bother to fight the goblins, simply bashing those who were in his way before continuing towards the green dots.

Naturally, the Goblins pursued him, but Alex was unfazed. He summoned a dozen shields imbued with Shield Spikes and commanded them to bash the Goblins behind him.

Pained cries reached his ears, but he didn't even spare those Goblins a single look.

After what seemed like an eternity of running, he heard the sound of fighting and knew he was near.

The Goblin Warlord was locked into a fierce duel with a swordsman, while his minions were being held at bay by two ladies fighting tooth and nail with the monsters surrounding them.

"Master!" Alex shouted as he activated his Shield Charge and sprinted forward like a battering ram.

The Goblin Warlord barely had time to turn its head before Alex crashed into it with bone-rattling force. The impact echoed like a thunderclap across the battlefield.

The two-meter-tall Goblin staggered a few steps as Alex's momentum slammed it into a tree.

"Dodge, Alex!" Cairo shouted as he channeled his Demon Slaying Arts to his sword.

The young man didn't hesitate to obey his Master's orders and immediately retreated, giving way to the Catkin Swordsman's deadly strike.

"Demon Slaying Arts, Sixth Form!" Cairo roared. "Lightbind Cross!"

Cairo slashed diagonally twice, forming a glowing cross of pure light.

The overlapping brilliance detonated in a flash so intense that it temporarily blinded the Goblin Warlord and illuminated the dark forest.

A moment later, a pained scream spread in the forest as Cairo's sword strike drew blood, hitting the Field Boss squarely in the chest.

But the fight wasn't over yet.

"Hammer for all Seasons, Second Form!" Alex shouted as he jumped and summoned another shield to step on and propel him higher in the air.

Holding the warhammer with both hands, Alex unleashed a strike aimed at the Goblin Warlord's head.

"Anvil Crash!" Alex announced as he mustered all of his strength to smash his warhammer down on the monster's head.

A blood-curdling sound reverberated through the surroundings as the Goblin Warlord coughed out a mouthful of blood.

After being hit by the powerful strikes of the master and disciple, the monster was on its last legs.

"Blazing Sword Arts, Third Form!" Elaine gripped the handle of her flaming sword with both hands.

She then took a step forward and sprinted, intending to pierce through the monster's body with her sword.

"Bladelight Ignition!"

Like a blazing spear, the swordswoman clad in flames crashed into the Goblin Warlord, who could no longer defend himself.

Elaine's sword pierced right through his chest and came out from his back, but she wasn't done yet.

She twisted her sword before cutting sideways, sending blood and guts splattering as the Goblin Warlord collapsed on the ground.

Just as everyone thought the battle had been decided, several hooded figures jumped out of the trees with swords and daggers drawn, ready to strike Alex without warning.

Unfortunately for them, Alex had already seen them closing in on the map, so he had already prepared himself for their sneak attack.

“Shield Charge!” Alex shouted and charged at a nearby goblin, sending the latter flying towards a tree. That blow was enough to end the sorry creature.

He used the maneuver to dodge his opponents’ strikes. They had attacked from different angles, believing their surprise assault would finish him.

“Who are they, Alex?” Cairo asked as he stood beside his disciple. “Friends of yours?”

“No, Master,” Alex answered. “They’re my fans.”

Cairo smiled faintly. He hadn’t seen his disciple for a few months. Hearing that familiar brand of cocky sarcasm reminded him of the time they had spent training together.

“I’ve been ruining the plans of the Demon Worshipers as of late,” Alex explained hastily. “Now, they hold a vendetta against me.”

“As expected of my disciple,” Cairo commented. “Good job.”

“You’re still a troublemaker, Alex.” Elaine stood to Alex’s right, making sure to fight against the bastards who dared to harm her friend.

“Kill the men and cripple the woman,” Eric ordered. “We’ll have some fun with her after we finish our missi—argghh!”

A short-sword went right through Eric's chest, making his eyes widen in shock.

"I-Impossible," Eric muttered before he collapsed on the ground without knowing how he died or who killed him.

Efa gave her short-sword a sharp flick, sending droplets of blood flying to the ground.

She gave Alex a slight smile before turning into a black mist, merging with the shadows in the forest.

Since the Demon Worshipers had come to kill Alex, she would not allow any of them to leave this place alive.

Efa wasn't the only one thinking this way.

Cairo and Elaine simultaneously moved to deal with the Demon Worshipers, who suddenly realized their opponents were way stronger than they were.

Even Alex noticed that his Master and the two ladies had become far stronger since the last time he had seen them.

Elaine easily cut down one of the Demon Worshipers with a slash, even breaking their weapon in half.

Cairo moved like he had mastered teleportation.

Each sword strike hit its target, drawing blood without fail.

Efa was just as deadly, appearing like an angel of death as she reaped the lives of her enemies left and right.

As a Shadow Scout, a dark forest was the perfect place for her to kill people without too much effort.

This was especially true for those who were weaker than her.

“Efa and Elaine only reached Rank 3 a few months ago,” Alex thought, “but based on their strength, they seem to be Rank 4 already. And Master... His damage against the Goblin Warlord matches those of Rank 5.”

Their growth rate was simply too fast. He struggled to figure out how his Master and friends had grown so much stronger in such a short time.

‘Did they get a cheat or something?’ Alex mused. ‘I guess I’ll ask them later.’

After that short delay, Alex joined them in dealing with the Demon Worshipers. It didn’t take long for these hideous men to fall silent forever.

Some tried to flee, but Efa and Cairo didn’t let them escape. There was simply no escaping the two of them. Not only did they move very fast, but they were also very deadly with their sword strikes.

Meanwhile, Alex and Elaine busied themselves in killing the rest of the Goblins who didn’t run away even after the Goblin Warlord had died.

Nearly half an hour of fighting later, the Goblins finally had enough and retreated back to their nest.

When Dim Dim and Lumi arrived at the scene, they saw Alex leaning on a tree and panting for breath.

His clothes were dyed with the blood of the Demon Worshipers and the Goblins, who now lay scattered around them.

Just as Lumi was about to ask if Alex was alright, a young lady with shoulder-length blonde hair appeared in Alex’s shadow.

“Watch out!” Lumi cried out as she sprinted toward Alex to save him.

But a moment later, she froze in place when she saw the young lady give Alex a hug and a kiss on the cheek right in front of her.

Chapter 393: Unexpected Reunion [Part 3]

“It’s good to see you again, Dim Dim,” Elaine said as she picked up the little bun with both hands. To its delight, she then kissed its cheek.

“Dim Dim!” Dim Dim giggled, happy to see Elaine, one of its first friends in the Town of Thaloria, once more.

Meanwhile, Cairo was chatting with Alex, asking him what he was doing there.

“I plan to go to Slime Paradise, Master,” Alex answered. “So I took a quest as close to it as possible.

“After much deliberation, Dim Dim chose this quest because he wanted to help the villagers. How about you, Master? Why are you here?”

Cairo smiled faintly. “We also came because of a guild commission. Although it’s not profitable, I can’t turn a blind eye to those who need help.”

Alex felt proud of his Master and once again realized why Cairo became the Heaven’s Sword of the Clawford Tribe.

He was the strongest swordsman among the Catkins, a warrior who had traveled the continent hunting demons and their worshipers. His life’s work was to ensure the common people could live in peace.

“Well, then. Why don’t you introduce me to your girlfriend?” Cairo teased.

“I’m not his girlfriend, Sir Cairo,” Lumi answered. “I’m just acting as his bodyguard and making sure to collect evidence of his philandering ways.”

Efa smirked after hearing Lumi's reply. She was wondering if the young fox lady was one of Alex's Queens, whom he had told her about before they had parted ways.

As a lady and a scout, Efa naturally noticed the sidelong glances Lumi was giving her.

It was very obvious that the fox lady was also observing her closely, as if trying to understand her relationship with Alex.

"Alex, don't be a philanderer, okay?" Cairo commented. "Or else, I'll cut it off."

"Master, I am not a philanderer," Alex replied, looking very wronged. "Lumi is just sprouting nonsense."

"Hmph!" Lumi scoffed as she crossed her arms over her chest. Clearly, she was very displeased with whatever she was seeing.

Cairo patted Alex's shoulder before looking at the corpses around them.

"Let's go back to the village," Cairo suggested. "We can worry about the goblins in the morning."

No one opposed his proposal. They headed back to Oak Village, which was now on high alert after receiving Mark's warning.

When the guards saw Alex and the other Adventurers, they hurriedly opened the wooden gate to let them in.

"Where are the Goblins?" Mark asked. "They should be on the way, right?"

"The Goblins retreated," Alex answered. "At least for now. My Master and my friend here defeated the Goblin Warlord, so their morale dropped. After that, we killed more of them until they decided to retreat and call it quits."

The Village Head of Oak Village, Simon, breathed a sigh of relief after hearing that the Goblins had retreated.

He profusely thanked his guests for helping them in their time of great need.

“Please, eat well and rest well,” Simon told Alex and his friends. “We have watchguards assigned through the night, so we’ll quickly get notified if the Goblins return.”

Alex didn’t reject the invitation to eat and rest since he was indeed exhausted.

Even Lumi felt she had already reached her limit after scouting nonstop throughout the day.

When the rooms were about to be assigned to them, Efa volunteered to share a room with Alex.

However, this was immediately shot down by Lumi, who declared that she would be the one sharing a room with the young man.

To her surprise, Efa didn’t insist and gave Alex a knowing wink.

Lumi kept telling herself that she had to safeguard the other ladies from Alex even though she didn’t know anything about them.

A few minutes later in Alex’s room...

“It’s not like I’m sharing this room with you because I want to be with you,” Lumi declared. “Don’t get the wrong idea, okay?”

“Yes, Ma’am,” Alex answered.

He had already removed his bloody clothes earlier and replaced them with comfortable ones meant for sleeping.

Even Lumi was in her pajamas, ready to conk out.

It didn't take long for the two of them to fall asleep.

In fact, they were out like the light the moment their heads touched their pillows.

That was how tired they were from their expedition.

Dim Dim looked at the two sleeping teenagers before closing its eyes. It was also very drained from its adventure. It even snored softly as it rested on its small basket.

In another room, Elaine and Efa lay on the bed together.

"That girl seems to be very close to Alex," Elaine said with amusement.

"You're right," Efa replied. "But I'm glad that Alex seems to have gotten stronger after entering the academy."

"Indeed." Elaine nodded. "He looked very cool earlier."

Efa agreed with Elaine's statement as a gentle smile tugged at her lips. She had many questions to ask the young man.

One of those questions was whether he was happy in the academy and enjoying his life as a student.

She and Alex had made a promise to each other.

They were supposed to meet after Alex's first year in the academy had ended, so Efa would have enough time to reflect and sort out her true feelings for Alex.

Whether she liked him as a benefactor who had saved her from the Goblins.

Or whether she liked him as a man whom she wished to spend her life with.

In truth, Efa wished to support Alex's love and even planned to become his wingwoman so he could get close to his Queens.

Even if they didn't become a couple, she believed that she would be happy as long as Alex was happy.

These complicated thoughts swirled inside her head as sleep claimed her.

Efa dreamed the same dream she'd been having as of late.

In the dream, her mother's arms wrapped around her in a protective embrace, giving her a safe, comforting warmth.

All the worries in her head disappeared at that moment, replaced by a lasting peace that calmed her heart.

Efa's mother sang her a lullaby, not caring whether her daughter was already twenty-one years old.

"Enjoy your journey, my darling," the beautiful woman said softly. "The circle closes not to imprison you but to show that you have always been whole."

These words resounded faintly inside the dream, but Efa wasn't able to hear them.

She was busy dreaming a dream within a dream.

A dream where light and shadow wove together like a dance... maintaining the balance that allowed "Efa" to continue her existence.

Chapter 394: To Fight Or To Flee

The night passed by smoothly. Alex slept peacefully until he naturally woke up around noon.

When he opened his eyes, Lumi no longer lay beside him. Even Dim Dim was nowhere in the room.

As much as he'd like to continue sleeping, still tired from the battle the night before, he knew sleeping in wasn't an option.

He also felt hungry, so he left the bed, washed his face, and went to look for something to eat.

To his surprise, he found nobody inside Simon's house. But they were kind enough to leave some food for Alex on the table.

'I wonder where they are?' Alex thought as he ate the porridge deliberately set aside for him.

It didn't take long for him to finish his meal. After washing the dishes, he went outside to look for everyone.

Since the village was small, he only had to stroll a little before finding everyone else congregating at the village's small plaza.

Lumi was sharing what she had seen in the Goblin's nest.

"A Goblin High Shaman..." Simon, the village head, looked grim. "It is an adversary that is not easy to defeat."

"Right." Cairo nodded. "But it's not impossible for us to defeat. Its right-hand man, the Goblin Warlord, is already dead. As long as all the Hunters of the Village work together, we stand a chance of winning."

“Of course, if you wish to ask for help from the Adventurer’s Guild or evacuate entirely, I will support your decision.”

Goblins were known for their rapid increase in population when left unchecked. Whether the villagers wished to fight or to evacuate, they must make their decision as soon as possible.

Faced with such choices, the villagers were unusually quiet and solemn.

Fighting against such numbers wouldn’t be easy. But leaving the village where they had all grown up in was just as difficult.

“Sir Cairo, may I ask what your Rank is?” Simon inquired.

“I am a Rank 5 Demon Slayer,” Cairo answered.

Although he had suspected this already, Alex was still surprised by the confirmation that his Master had truly advanced so quickly within such a short period of time.

When they had parted with each other, his Master had only been a Rank 4 Demon Slayer.

Aside from the briefness of their separation, his master’s growth was truly exceptional in another way.

Cairo was only nineteen years old!

Reaching Rank 5 Demon Slayer at his age was phenomenal.

He could be called a prodigy among prodigies. His ability was baffling even to Alex.

‘As expected of the person who will be hailed as the Heaven’s Sword,’ Alex thought. ‘My Master is awesome!’

Cairo glanced at Alex and gave his disciple a faint smile. He had already sensed Alex's presence earlier, but since they had been in an important meeting, he hadn't greeted him right away.

"A Rank 5 Demon Slayer!" Simon gasped in shock. "The Clawford Tribe is indeed filled with talents. Then how about the two ladies accompanying you, Sir Cairo? May I know their ranks?"

"I'll leave it to them," Cairo answered. "It's up to them whether they want to mention their ranks."

Elaine looked at Alex before giving her reply. "I am a Rank 4 Flame Swordsman."

"I am a Rank 4 Shadow Scout," Efa stated.

'Wait, hold up!' Alex thought while blinking rapidly. He couldn't help but truly feel shocked due to how much stronger they'd gotten since their parting.

When Elaine, and Efa had come to help them conquer the Dungeon of Beginnings, the two of them had just barely reached Rank 3.

However, they were already Rank 4 after only a few months?

How was that even possible?

Of course, Alex had noticed that the two ladies were much stronger than before. However, he had assumed that they were only in the middle or late stage of Rank 3.

But for their Job Classes to actually reach Rank 4, that was truly unbelievable.

To reach Rank 3, a person must have a combined stat of 500 points.

In order to become a Rank 4, they would need a combined stat of 800 points.

As for Rank 5, a combined stat of 1,600 points

Alex had only managed to become a Rank 3 Oathkeeper because of the preparation he had made before challenging the Orion Dungeon, which was filled with Undead Monsters.

'Just what did they do to get that strong in such a short time?' Alex looked at his friends in shock.

Noticing his expression, Elaine couldn't help but chuckle. She had been looking forward to seeing his reaction after hearing her rank.

Now that she got the reaction she was expecting, she felt that all the hardship she had endured during the journey with Cairo was worth it.

Alex's reaction also made Efa quite happy. Back then, she had wanted to become strong so that she could help him. Now, she finally had the power to do so.

"We might stand a chance," Simon muttered.

He himself was a Rank 4 Mage, while most of the villagers were Rank 3 and Rank 4 Hunters.

They also had Rank 3 and Rank 4 Swordsmen to protect the Hunters if the enemies got too close.

"But there might still be casualties," Cairo pointed out. "Although we killed hundreds of Goblins last night, hundreds still remain. If you want to fight, prepare yourselves. This fight will not be easy."

When Lumi spotted Alex, she motioned for the young man to stand beside her.

Not wanting to disturb the discussion, Alex nodded and moved to where she was standing.

"I relayed everything that happened here to Latifa last night," Lumi whispered. "She said that if the villagers wished to fight, she would call for reinforcements. But don't tell anyone yet. Also, I made sure to ask Latifa to tell Lavinia that her brother is here with you."

"Thank you, Lumi," Alex replied.

If reinforcements would really come, then this battle might be winnable. The only problem right now was the Rank 6 High Goblin Shaman.

While it wasn't strong physically, its magical ability was nothing to scoff at.

A Rank 6 Field Boss wasn't an easy opponent to fight.

Had it been a Bug-Type Monster, Alex could have slapped it to oblivion with his wooden sandal no matter its rank.

Unfortunately, it wasn't a bug that he could squish so easily. If he were to be careless, the one who was getting stomped on would be him.

Chapter 395: I Almost Feel Sorry For The Goblins

"I have a proposal." Mark raised his hand. "How about we cull the goblins before fighting the Goblin High Shaman? With fewer minions, dealing with the leader will be easier."

The Hunters approved of this course of action.

Even Cairo thought that this was a sound plan.

Once the minions were defeated, they could focus on killing the Boss Monster. Winning against the leader wouldn't be as difficult then.

"If we agree to fight, will you support us, Sir Cairo?" Simon asked.

“That’s the reason we came here,” Cairo answered. “We will fight as long as the villagers wish to fight.”

Alex and Lumi exchanged a glance, and the latter nodded in understanding.

The young lady closed her eyes and passed the message to Latifa, who was still in the academy.

Half a minute later, Lumi looked at Alex with a complicated expression.

“What’s wrong?” Alex asked. “Did Latifa change her mind?”

“She didn’t,” Lumi replied. “Actually, she said that they are already on their way here. She was supposed to wait for the villagers to come to a decision, but when Lavinia heard that her brother was here, she decided to take matters into her own hands.”

“Huh?” Alex blinked in confusion. “What do you mean?”

As if waiting for that moment, a dark shadow fell upon Alex and the villagers.

High above the sky, two airships slowed down and started descending.

“Those look familiar,” Alex mumbled.

“Dim Dim!” Dim Dim landed softly on Alex’s head and reminded him whom those two ships belonged to.

The banners of the Kingdom of Avalon and the Clawford Tribe finally came into view as the two airships hovered several meters above ground.

The first airship belonged to Princess Xenia. This was the airship that they had used to travel to the Heracle Mountain.

The second flying ship belonged to the Clawford Tribe, the same ship that had taken Alex to the Town of Thaloria during its time of distress.

“Have no fear, everyone,” Chuck said as he floated down from one of the ships, making sure to use wind magic to make his cape flutter just a little more than normal. “The cavalry has arrived.”

The members of Endless Horizon, including Latifa, were on Princess Xenia’s flying ship, while the warriors of the Clawford Tribe were on the other.

They were the same warriors who had helped Alex back then. After learning that their Oathkeeper and Young Master were about to fight another great battle, the warriors had eagerly decided to join them.

From the deck, Latifa looked down on Alex.

She stared at him for a few seconds before shifting her attention to Efa, whom Lumi had mentioned.

Learning an unfamiliar woman had kissed Alex’s cheek and acted intimately with him made her extremely restless.

Because of this, she had asked to borrow Princess Xenia’s airship by directly explaining that Alex needed some help.

After telling the Princess the entire story, she hadn’t hesitated to tell all the members of Endless Horizon to also get Alex’s quest from the Mission Hall.

Since it was a group quest, it didn’t matter how many people took the quest. Besides, the club members had already finished their original missions.

Knowing their President was in a tricky situation, the princess had decided to lend a hand.

After all, this was a good way to make Alex owe her a favor.

Chuck and Charles had immediately signed up for the quest after hearing that Alex was going to fight a horde of goblins to save a village.

Renard, who refused to lose to his rival either, had also gotten on the bandwagon.

Evangeline had wanted to go, but Eleanora had stopped her.

They shouldn't be seen with Alex outside of the academy since it would cause complications with their organization.

Evangeline had reluctantly agreed, not wanting to cause problems for her father.

Lapiz had tagged along as well because she was now a member of the club.

However, there were two additions whom Latifa hadn't expected.

Fran and Daisy, Dim Dim's best friend in the academy, had offered their assistance too.

The moment Dim Dim saw Daisy, the little bun didn't hesitate to summon a shield beside the Doom Cow and jumped on top of it.

It then nudged Daisy's cheek with its cheek to thank her for coming.

"Your Highness!" The villagers knelt to greet Princess Xenia, who had personally come to help them.

"Be at ease everyone," Princess Xenia said. "All of you are the people of the Kingdom. I will do my best to rid you of the Goblins plaguing you."

She had also brought her Knights and her Godfather, Sir Alphonse, with her.

"I almost feel sorry for the Goblins," Alex said to Lumi, who nodded.

With a small elite army acting as their reinforcements, fighting against the Rank 6 Goblin High Shaman was now not just possible but manageable.

"We've come, Oathkeeper!" one of the warriors of the Clawford Tribe said as soon as he jumped off the airship, landing just a couple of meters away from Alex. "It will be our honor to fight alongside you and the Young Master."

After greeting Alex, the warrior turned to Cairo and gave him a respectful bow.

The other warriors of the Clawford Tribe did the same, and Cairo gave them a nod of acknowledgment.

"Brother, I have come to help," Lavinia said with a smile.

"Did you really come to help me or did you come to help Alex?" Cairo whispered.

"O-Of course I've come to help you, Brother," Lavinia answered hastily. "But since Alex is also here, I decided to help you both."

Cairo cracked a knowing and somewhat cheeky smile but didn't say more.

Now that reinforcements were here, they held a meeting to determine their strategy to defeat the Goblin High Shaman before it could finish gathering its army.

After the Goblin Warlord's death, it decided to hunt down those who were responsible and thus avenge its kin.

Little did it know that the small village it had looked down upon was no longer the same helpless place it could easily destroy on a whim.

Chapter 396: Goblin Slayers [Part 1]

After the meeting, several hunters agreed to accompany the reinforcements to the Goblin's Nest and fight against the Goblin High Shaman.

Among them was Mark, who already knew where to go.

To ensure the non-combatants' safety, Princess Xenia proposed that they all board the airships before the fight.

The Hunters wholeheartedly agreed to this proposal. Only when their families' safety was guaranteed could they fight with minimal worry.

Once everyone was properly evacuated, the fighters marched toward the Goblin's Nest.

Lumi, Lotte, and the Ninjas of the Clawford Tribe had all scouted in advance to ensure that they would know as much as they could about the movement of their enemies.

Knowing that their upcoming enemies were hundreds of Goblins, they chose to play it safe by luring some of the monsters away from their base.

"Divide and conquer," one of the Ninjas had pointed out.

After nearly two hours of setting up traps along the way, Alex asked Latifa to start the operation.

Since she could communicate with Lumi and Lotte, as well as see and hear everything her Alters took in, it was only natural that she took on the messenger role.

Everyone had carefully hidden themselves, ready to strike as soon as the Goblins came within their range.

It didn't take long before they heard countless footsteps, as well as the warcries, from the Goblins that Lumi and Lotte had lured to their location.

Once the two young ladies had passed a certain point, two Ninjas raised a rope between the trees, tripping the Goblin Riders mounted on Dire Wolves.

The Goblin Rider Formation instantly crumbled, rendering some of them helpless.

“Attack!” Alex shouted.

Immediately, countless arrows and spells rained down on the fallen Goblins, not giving them time to react to the ambush that Alex and his team had prepared for them.

Dim Dim pointed to the Goblins while he was perched on top of Daisy and gave the Doom Cow a command.

“Daisy, Flamethrower!” Dim Dim ordered.

“Mooooooooo!” Daisy unleashed a spray of flames from her mouth. Any Goblin unlucky enough to be caught in the range of her attack ended up being burned alive.

The defenders ignored the screams of pain and horror as they quickly eliminated the first batch of Goblins who had fallen into their traps.

It didn’t take long for more Goblins to arrive, intensifying the battle.

But despite their numbers, the forest was not exactly an advantageous place for Goblins to fight.

The same couldn’t be said for the members of the Clawford Tribe, who grew up surrounded by forests and used them as their daily training grounds.

With a speed surpassing that of a normal human, the Catkins jumped out of their hiding spots and killed their foes without mercy.

The Hunters of Oak Village also proved that they were all sharp shooters, making sure to eliminate any stragglers that were “lucky” enough to escape the traps.

“It’s coming!” Latifa declared.

As if waiting for her announcement, a giant fireball flew in the direction where the battle was being waged.

The Goblin High Shaman didn’t care if its kin was going to die with its attack. All that mattered to it was that it could kill as many of its enemies as possible.

“Oh no, you don’t!” Alex leapt into action and summoned Svalinn. “Shield Charge!”

Ignoring the shouts of warning around him, the young man headed straight toward the Fireball without an ounce of hesitation.

A loud explosion shook the forest as Alex tanked the Goblin High Shaman’s attack, which sent him flying.

Alex was not seriously injured thanks to his High Fire Resistance, but the momentum of the attack was still strong enough to knock him away.

Fortunately, Fran caught him mid-air and he landed safely on the ground.

“Thank you, Fran,” Alex said. “I owe you one.”

“No need for thanks,” Fran answered. “I only did that to save my friend.”

After that short exchange, the two joined the others in fighting against the Goblins. Cairo, Elaine, Efa, Princess Xenia, Mary, Chuck, Nessia, and Sir Alphonse (Princess Xenia’s Godfather) all charged at the Goblin High Shaman.

Lumi and Lotte were already attacking the Field Boss Monster with spells, preventing it from targeting the rest of their team.

However, the Goblin Mages and the Goblin Shamans, who acted as the Goblin High Shaman's bodyguards, were powerful in their own right and blocked their attacks with some difficulty.

"Damn, there's so many of them," Chuck complained as he hid behind Nessia's Earth Wall. "How can we power through so many casters?"

Nessia wasn't in a position to reply as she was busy reinforcing her Earth Wall, currently being chipped by countless spells.

Suddenly, an explosion happened right in front of them, which made Chuck peek from the side of the Earth Wall.

Countless black ants that were a meter long charged at the Goblins, prompting the mages and shamans to prioritize them instead.

The Obsidian Ants were only Rank 1 Monsters, but there were hundreds of them.

Nessia then glanced at Charles, whose hands were pressed on the ground as he summoned more Obsidian Ants to fight for them.

"We're winning!" Chuck laughed.

But his laughter didn't last long because the Goblin High Shaman pointed its staff at the ants and unleashed a Ray of Flames that instantly annihilated anything within its path.

"You and your big mouth." Nessia clicked her tongue before dispersing her Earth Wall.

She then threw several monster cores towards the Goblins and activated the rune magic that was transcribed in them.

The monster cores exploded, creating a smokescreen that prevented the Goblins from seeing their targets.

Just as Chuck thought that was a good move, an ice arrow almost hit his head.

Fortunately, Chuck barely managed to see it in time and dodge.

Now that Goblins' vision was compromised, they resorted to casting spells randomly, hoping that they would hit someone.

This barrage posed a great danger to everyone, so they weren't able to advance so easily.

"Master, behind me!" Alex shouted.

The young man once again activated his shield charge and sprinted at the barrage of spells that looked like they were coming out of the smokescreen.

Several flaming shields rotated around him, serving as an additional layer of protection as he made a wild dash to pave his way for his Master to advance.

Princess Xenia had always been a warrior princess, so the moment she saw Alex charge at their enemies, she didn't hesitate to follow him.

Mary and Sir Alphonse tagged along, making sure that their Princess would be safe from harm.

"Looks like I need a little boost," Chuck muttered as he took out a golden potion from his storage ring and chugged it.

After drinking the Conqueror's Heart Potion, the young man's mind cleared and his senses sharpened.

He then dashed forward and summoned Fire Whips to deflect or disperse all the spells that were flying about.

For a moment, Nessia almost didn't recognize Chuck since the troublemaker fought like a seasoned expert.

"Let's go, Nessia." Vaan, who had just finished eliminating the Goblins around them, appeared beside the young lady. His spear was covered in blood.

"I'm not paid enough for this," Nessia complained, but she still followed Vaan, who was using Chuck as a shield to advance.

Charles summoned a two-meter-tall Ant and jumped on top of its body before ordering it to charge forward as well.

"Let's deal with the small fries first." Chuck glanced at his comrades with a faint smile. "That way, my fiancée can deal with the Field Boss."

"Sounds like a plan." Vaan's eyes glowed faintly as the symbol VII briefly appeared on the back of his right hand. "But I'm not stopping."

He then jumped. When he was still in the air, a white horse materialized under his body.

The horse's mane, tail, and hooves were covered with white flames. The sight utterly surprised Nessia, who was running a few meters behind Vaan.

The horse neighed with arrogance as it charged towards the smokescreen, leaving a trail of white flames in its wake.

"Unbelievable," Chuck commented. "I'd better ask Vaan where I can buy a horse like that later."

Nessia didn't want to admit it, but she also wished to have such a beautiful horse!

However, the two teenagers put this idea aside as the smoke finally dispersed and their enemies were once again in view.

Chapter 397: Goblin Slayers [Part 2]

When the smoke cleared, the Goblin High Shaman and its bodyguards saw Alex charging straight at them.

Naturally, they focused their spells on the young man in an attempt to stop him from coming even closer.

The dozens of flaming shields that rotated around Alex shattered one by one as spells rained down on him.

He summoned a dozen more shields, but instead of imbuing them with flames like before, he chose another kind of spell.

"Mirror Shield!" Alex roared.

All the Rank 1 Spells that the Goblin Mages and Goblin Shamans had thrown at him slammed against his shields and were reflected to their casters.

This was one of Alex's newest skills, which guaranteed him magical immunity against Rank 1 spells.

The Mirror Shield [EX] was very effective against low-ranking spells. However, against High-Ranking Spells, these shields only offered a fixed magical resistance.

In short, the shields could tank a single hit from Rank 2 Spells before shattering completely.

By Rank 3 spells, the shields would shatter easily, though it would still lower the firepower of the attacks to a certain extent.

“Are you okay, Alex?” Cairo asked as his disciple continued to charge forward, summoning more shields as he tanked the barrage of spells like there was no tomorrow.

“No, Master,” Alex admitted through gritted teeth. “But we’re almost there.”

They were only dozens of meters away from the High Goblin Shaman, who was the biggest threat of all.

Alex was burning through his Mana Reserves. It wouldn’t be long before his Mana Counter reached zero.

However, this was a sacrifice he needed to make. Once they managed to get close to the mages, all hell would break loose.

The Goblin High Shaman once again hurled a Giant Fireball at Alex, hoping it would be enough to kill the annoying bug trying to get close to it.

With a single thought, all the shields that were rotating around Alex burst into flames before launching themselves at the Goblin Mages and Goblin Shamans like homing missiles.

Alex still had a Rare Skill Book in his arsenal, which he had used to learn another skill that made the Shield Savant Class a terrifying Job Class.

This skill was none other than Shield Chaser [EX].

Unlike his skill, Shield Throw, which required him to personally throw the shield, Shield Chaser [EX] shot the magical shields like missiles.

And the best part about it?

This skill would lock on to its target and fly at them with deadly precision no matter how they tried to dodge or flee.

This shield-based long-range attack was Alex's answer to the long-range spells of mages.

He used this skill because his shields would simply shatter if they were hit by the Goblin High Shaman's Giant Fireball.

Instead of wasting them, Alex simply used them more effectively while he planted his feet firmly on the ground and prepared to tank the attack that had sent him flying earlier.

Suddenly, he felt a pair of hands rest on his shoulders.

"I'll help you," Cairo said, supporting Alex's back as the fireball descended upon them.

A powerful explosion shook the ground, trees, and even the sky itself as a grunt escaped Alex's lips.

The master and disciple skidded a few meters from where they had stood, but they were able to successfully tank the attack.

At that moment, a familiar voice reached the young man's ears.

"Thanks for the assist, Alex."

Vaan then sprinted past Alex and Cairo as he charged at the low-ranking Goblin Mages and Goblin Shamans with his spear, ready to strike.

Vaan cut through the Goblin Ranks like a hot knife through butter, killing everything in his path.

"Go, Master," Alex said as he fell on one knee, panting for breath. "I'll catch up soon."

“Okay,” Cairo replied before taking a step forward and instantly reappearing only a few meters away from the Goblin High Shaman.

“Demon Slaying Arts, Fist Form,” Cairo roared. “Culling Blade!”

The catkin’s sword flamed purple as he slashed the body of the Goblin High Shaman.

However, the Field Boss parried his attack with its staff before unleashing a poison breath attack at point-blank range.

Cairo already expected that his attack might not land, so he dodged timely and avoided the Poison Attack.

Chuck, Charles, and Nessia all arrived at the scene and attacked the Goblin Mages and Goblin Shamans.

No one was stupid enough to take this lightly. A single Goblin might not be much of a threat, but together under the command of Mages and Shamans, they were a constant danger that must be eliminated.

Meanwhile, Princess Xenia, Mary, and Sir Alphonse joined Cairo in the battle against the Field Boss Monster.

They knew that they wouldn’t be able to bring it down easily, but that was fine with them.

Their original plan was to only distract the Boss Monster so that the rest could deal with its minions.

Once the minions were dead, they would then assist Cairo and the others in fighting against the Boss Monster.

Complete pandemonium descended on the battlefield as everyone fought tooth and nail with each other.

While this was happening, Alex was chugging a few potions to regain his health, mana, and stamina.

Although he didn't say anything, tanking those many spells at the same time took a toll on him.

Even now, his body was as heavy as lead, but his sacrifice had allowed his allies to close the gap between them and their enemies.

"Dim Dim?" Dim Dim and Daisy finally arrived, stopping beside Alex to ask him if he was alright.

"I'm fine, Dim Dim," Alex replied. "Please help the others."

"Dim!" Dim Dim nodded and asked Daisy to charge at the Goblin Mages and Shamans, who were desperate to kill Vaan, Chuck, Charles, and Nessia.

Alex then glanced in the direction of the Boss Monster and noticed that Renard and Fran had also joined the fray, fighting alongside Cairo and the others.

"Hmph! Tired already?" Lumi asked as she landed beside Alex. "Are you sitting this one out, Alex?"

"Of course not," Alex replied. "I'm just catching my breath. Since you look so peppy, Lumi, why don't you help kill those goblins?"

"Fine." Lumi clicked her tongue. "Lotte, guard this fool and make sure he doesn't croak on us."

Lotte giggled and nodded. "Okay. I'll make sure that Alex is safe."

Lumi gave the young man a side-long glance before flying toward the Goblin Mages being massacred by her club members.

Chuck was exceptionally effective against the Goblin Mages and Shamans. With a single flick of his hand, several fire whips materialized out of thin air.

These Fire Whips then grabbed the Goblins' knobby ankles and yanked hard. Although this tactic was childish, it was surprisingly effective. After all, a Goblin trying to regain its footing was a Goblin too distracted to cast spells.

Charles was just as deadly with his hands and feet as they transformed into those of a Void-Touched, giving him increased strength and speed.

Nessia played a supporting role and blocked the spells aimed at her club members.

Although they hadn't fought many battles together, their teamwork was nearly flawless.

"They're finally here," Lotte said when she saw Latifa, Lavinia, Lapis, Elaine, and Efa running toward them.

These ladies prioritized saving their injured allies, prioritizing those who were one Goblin attack away from death.

(A/N: I know, there are many FL's who start with the letter L. But Life also starts with L so there's that. Kekeke!)

Due to their timely help, no one had perished in the battle as of yet.

Their role was certainly less flashy but no less important. Efa, who could move through the shadows, instantly teleported to the shadows of her allies who were about to receive a killing blow and ambushed their attackers.

Latifa and Lapis both used their magic to give first aid to the injured.

Lavinia and Elaine guarded them, making sure that they could focus on healing despite all the commotion around them.

“Are you alright, Alex?” Latifa asked as she placed her hand on Alex’s back, channeling her healing magic through his body.

“I’m fine,” Alex answered. “Just a bit tired. Please help the others.”

Lavinia, Elaine, and Efa nodded before running toward the greatest danger on this battlefield.

Alex watched them go as he waited to recover his strength.

“Alex, let’s try something,” Latifa whispered. “Let’s use the Verdant Throne.”

The young man turned to her to see if she was serious.

“Are you sure?” Alex answered.

“Yes.” Latifa nodded. “I want to know if we can use its full power together.”

Both of them had received half of the power of the Verdant Throne after their trial in the Heracle Mountain.

Since then, they hadn’t gotten the chance to try combining the two halves and awaken its true power.

“Very well,” Alex agreed. “Let’s do it.”

Latifa nodded before glancing at their friends and allies.

As if reading her mind, Lotte cast a Firewall of Blue Flames around them, preventing anyone from seeing what was going to happen next.

Alex and Latifa stared at each other, solidifying their resolve, then leaned into the other for a kiss.

That was how the Verdant Throne was activated, which was a big reason why they hadn't tested it after the trial.

As soon as their lips brushed against each other, the piece of the Verdant Throne inside their bodies flared to life. Latifa turned into particles of light and merged with Alex's body.

Purple flames wrapped themselves around Alex's body as Latifa's power merged with him.

The young man felt his strength soar, allowing him to finally stand up.

A few seconds later, three flaming purple tails appeared behind his back. From a distance, he resembled a flaming demi-human fox.

When Lotte's Fire Wall finally dissipated, Alex raised his foot to take a single step.

When his foot landed on the ground again, he was almost within touching distance of the Goblin Mages and Shamans.

Before these monsters could even process the audacity of this fool who'd appeared so close to them, Alex snapped his fingers.

A second later, a Fire Tornado took shape around him and incinerated all the Goblins, who were dead before they even remembered to scream.

Chapter 398: Verdant Celestial [Part 1]

"What the..." Lumi couldn't help but pause, distracted by Alex's current form.

A halo of purple faerie fire, one of Latifa's signature abilities, enveloped the young man.

With three flaming tails fluttering behind his back, he was a vision so breathtaking it made the young lady's heart skip a beat.

After killing the Goblin Mages and Goblin Shamans within his immediate range, Alex summoned dozens of shields, all of which were imbued with purple flames.

Like a barrage of missiles, the shields shot out simultaneously, slamming into the other Goblins with merciless force.

When Alex and Latifa merged, they unlocked a temporary subclass called Verdant Celestial.

This was the true power they acquired from the trial at the Heracle Mountain, only achievable when the two parts of the Verdant Throne become one.

< Verdant Celestial >

“When the Verdant Throne awakens, two hearts beat as one flame.

Mercy and Judgment intertwine, bound in love’s eternal name.”

— You learned the skill, Verdant Heal [EX]

— You learned the skill, Faerie Fire Immolation [EX]

— You learned the skill, Light [EX]

— You learned the skill, Vine Frenzy [EX]

[Passive Buffs]

- Increase Health Regeneration by 500%
- Increase Stamina Regeneration by 200%
- Increase Physical Defense by 200%
- Increase Mana Regeneration by 500%
- Once a day, when your Health Points go below 10%, you will automatically recover to full health.
- You are immune to Instant Death Abilities.
- You can regenerate any part of your body that has been cut off except for your head.

Note: All buffs gained from the Temporary Sub-Class, Verdant Celestial, will stack with the current passive buffs of your current Job Class, Oathkeeper, and your Sub-Class, Demon Slayer.

— — —

< Verdant Heal [EX] >

- Heals all injuries but can't regenerate lost body parts of others.

— — —

< Faerie Fire Immolation [EX] >

- Covers your body in Faerie Fire and deals Fire Damage to any foe that engages you in combat.

— Automatically reveals invisible creatures or objects within your fifty-meter radius.

— — —

< Light [EX] >

— Creates an extremely bright light, illuminating your surroundings up to twenty meters.

— — —

< Vine Frenzy [EX] >

— Enables you to summon thorny vines and command them as if they are part of your body.

— — —

Not only did their union unlock the power of the Verdant Celestial, but it also merged Alex's and Latifa's stats. The power of their joint form was now Fourth Rank.

However, it didn't end there.

The stacking boosts from his passive skills elevated his fighting prowess to that of a Rank 5, a massive improvement in overall strength.

Alex ignored the Goblin High Shaman and focused on massacring its minions. Just as everyone had agreed earlier, defeating the small fries first would make it easier for them to deal with the Field Boss.

With everyone's help, eliminating all the monsters only took five minutes. That even included the reinforcements that had returned to help their leader.

Finally recognizing its overwhelming disadvantage, the Goblin High Shaman erected a barrier around itself, deflecting all incoming attacks.

“Careful! It’s about to cast an attack spell!” Nessia shouted after realizing what the monster was about to do.

From within the safety of its barrier, it was chanting a high-ranking spell in an attempt to get rid of its enemies.

Nessia had quickly discerned this fighting style since most High-Ranking Mages opt for this strategy when fighting alone.

Just as she predicted, the Goblin High Shaman soon unleashed a powerful spell called Fire Storm.

Flames rained down from the sky, forcing everyone to scatter to evade them.

“To me!” Alex shouted as he cast countless flaming shields to protect his allies, blocking the attacks they weren’t able to evade.

Though the Fire Storm ended after a minute, Nessia’s relief was cut short when she noticed the Goblin High Shaman already preparing its next spell.

Alex charged forward with Svalinn at hand, then he once again summoned dozens of flaming shields, which he sent toward the Field Boss hiding behind its barrier.

The sound of continuous explosions battered the barrier, as if using brute force would be enough to break it down.

While that scenario didn’t become reality, white smoke spread in the surroundings and blocked the Goblin High Shaman from seeing its targets.

But it didn't matter as long as he finished chanting. It didn't need to aim since the spell would hit everything in the area of effect.

Unfortunately, that was a mistake.

Because of the white smoke, it failed to see Alex unleash a skill that would remove its advantageous position.

"Hammer For All Seasons, Ninth Form!" Alex roared as he swung his warhammer, imbued with a force meant to shatter any and all kinds of barriers.

"Shield Breaker!"

Thunderclap-like sound echoed in the battlefield as the young man's warhammer slammed on the Goblin High Shaman's barrier.

A second later, the shattering of the barrier served as their cue. Cairo, Lavinia, Princess Xenia, Renard, Fran, Mary, Elaine, and Efa all charged forward, unleashing their strongest attacks.

The white smoke dispersed, and the Goblin High Shaman appeared in everyone's sight.

It had already finished chanting its spell, about to slam its staff on the ground to unleash another spell called Cinder Wave.

This spell would unleash a wave of molten cinders that swept outward, leaving only smoldering ruin in its wake.

But before its staff could tap the ground, a few Fire Whips and Thorny Vines grabbed hold of the Goblin High Shaman's arms, stopping him from unleashing its spell.

"Demon Slaying Arts, Seventh Form! Phantom Purge!"

“Horizon Striker, First Form! Skybreaker Dash!”

“Heavy Spiral!”

“”Hell Crusher Kick!””

“Blade Piercer!”

“Bladelight Ignition!”

“Shadow Claw!”

The attacks landed squarely on the High Goblin’s body, who was helpless to defend itself from the onslaught of attacks.

Daisy charged in its direction, while Dim Dim held an Alchemy Bomb, ready to finish the Boss Monster that had suffered a devastating blow from its allies.

“Dim Dim!” Dim Dim jumped high up in the air and threw its Alchemy Bomb, the size of a bowling ball.

Daisy unleashed a flamethrower at the right time, hitting the bomb as it collided with the High Goblin Shaman’s head.

A powerful explosion erupted, its mini-shockwave forcing everyone back to a safe distance.

When the dust and smoke settled, the Goblin High Shaman was half-kneeling on the ground, using its staff to support itself.

Chapter 399: Verdant Celestial [Part 2]

The Goblin High Shaman was already a step away from the grave, and Alex had no intention of letting it make a comeback.

“Shield Chaser,” Alex said softly as he pointed his finger at the Field Boss, who managed to survive the combined attacks of his allies.

Dozens of flaming shields rained down on the monster, finally taking its life.

The moment it collapsed on the ground, the young man heard a notification sound inside its head, and a blue window screen appeared in front of him.

— — —

< You have completed a Hidden Quest! >

< Quest Name: Preventing an Outbreak!

< Mission Goal: Prevent the Goblins from taking over Ashenbark Forest, which they would use as their base to conquer the nearby villages and towns. >

< Rewards: 5,000 Arcana Points, 2,000 Gold Coins, 3 Level Ups! >

— — —

< Level Up! >

< Level Up! >

< Level Up! >

The sound of the Level Ups was like music in Alex’s ears. However, the battle had not truly ended.

To prevent any future troubles, he and the rest of his allies hunted down the remaining Goblins, who had started to scatter after their leader was defeated.

Unfortunately for them, it didn't matter where they ran or hid. Alex easily found them with his map, which showed their locations.

Many were hurt, and some were seriously hurt during this battle. But thankfully, no one died.

Those who could use healing skills administered first aid on themselves, while the rest used potions to recover.

Alex landed in a secluded clearing, well away from the rest of the group.

Sensing no threats in the surroundings, he deactivated the power of the Verdant Throne.

Latifa materialized in front of him and looked at him with a smile.

Her mouth opened as if to say something, but before she could make a sound, her legs suddenly gave way, and she fell face-first toward Alex's chest.

The young man caught her, but just like her, he could feel his legs about to give way at any time.

To prevent the two of them from falling, Alex leaned his back against a tree, using it as support to keep both of them steady.

For a moment, Latifa didn't say anything. She let Alex wrap his arms around her, holding her in place.

A minute later, she pulled back and looked at the young man's face, which revealed his exhaustion.

No words were spoken between them because there was no need for it.

Alex lowered his head and kissed Latifa on the lips.

She returned his kiss, which lasted only for a few seconds.

“Latifa...” Alex was about to say something more, but Lumi and Lotte materialized beside the two of them.

“Go on,” Lumi said with her arms crossed over her chest. “Don’t let us disturb you. Treat us as air.”

Lotte looked at Alex with embarrassment and mouthed a few words that said “I tried to stop her,” allowing the young man to understand the situation.

Latifa, who was too embarrassed to look at her Alters, once again buried her head on Alex’s chest.

The young man lightly patted her head, while glaring at Lumi, who had once again gotten in his way.

“I have a feeling that you’re doing this on purpose, Lumi,” Alex said. “Can’t you pick a better timing?”

“I have no idea what you’re talking about,” Lumi replied. “What is this timing that you speak of? Is that edible?”

Alex wanted to roll his eyes at her reply, but decided that it wasn’t worth the effort. He was feeling lethargic after undoing his union with Latifa.

‘I have to consider the side-effects when using the Verdant Throne,’ Alex thought as he continued to hold the young lady in his embrace.

Fortunately, Lumi didn’t say anything like “How long do you plan to hug Latifa?”, which allowed Alex to have a semi-intimate moment with her, under her Alters’ watchful gazes.

A few minutes later, Lumi coughed lightly as if telling them that time was up.

“The others will start looking for the two of you, so it’s best that we return now,” Lumi stated. “Can any of you walk on your own?”

Alex and Latifa glanced at each other before shaking their heads at the same time.

“Lotte, please carry Latifa,” Lumi said. “I’ll carry this brute.”

“Brute?” Alex blinked. “Who are you calling brute?”

“Hmph!” Lumi ignored him and reached out to support his body. “You have two choices. Get carried like a princess, or I piggyback you.”

The young man pondered for a while, and decided to choose the less embarrassing option.

“Piggyback me,” Alex answered.

Lumi looked at the young man with contempt as if she was looking at a disgusting worm.

But, since she was the one that gave those options, she allowed him to mount her back, allowing her to give him a piggyback ride.

One of the reasons why Alex had chosen this option was because he thought that it would be a unique experience being carried by Lumi in this manner.

While Lulu might be his favorite among Latifa’s Alters, Lumi was his second best.

He knew that despite her fierceness, Lumi was actually a very caring, and loving person.

She was Latifa's fearless side, which she never showed to anyone.

"Already this old, and still needs a girl to piggyback him," Lumi grumbled as she carried Alex, following behind Lotte, who was carrying Latifa. "Such a disgrace, and you call yourself a man? Pitui!"

"A lady shouldn't spit on the ground, you know?" Alex commented, enjoying Lumi's complaints along the way. "It's very unladylike."

"Shut up," Lumi hissed. "If you have the strength to talk, you should have the strength to walk."

"But, I don't have the strength to walk right now..."

"Weakling!"

Lotte couldn't help but giggle as she heard the bickering behind her.

Latifa, on the other hand, only sighed as she remembered the moment when Alex was about to tell her something.

She didn't know if he was about to confess to her, or not.

Truth be told, she was both regretful, and relieved that Lumi and Lotte appeared when they did.

Regretful because a part of her wanted to know what Alex wished to say.

Relieved because her heart wasn't ready for it. At least, not yet.

Latifa already knew what Alex felt about her.

She discovered it after they merged together back in the Heracle Mountain, and confirmed it after today's union.

Since she knew about his feelings, she also knew that she wasn't the only one, who holds a position in his heart.

Still, this knowledge made her feel happy, especially after Alex kissed her earlier.

It was his silent confession of his feelings towards her, and for now, that was enough.

Chapter 400: Why Am I Not Surprised?

The villagers rejoiced after their brave heroes returned victorious.

Many were injured, but none of their lives were in danger. Because of this, everyone agreed to hold a celebration.

Those who were more skilled at cooking busied themselves with food preparation while the Hunters and some members of the Clawford Tribe prepared the meat from the beasts that they had killed on the way back.

While everyone was busy, Alex, and Latifa lay on a bed together, recuperating from the backlash of using the Verdant Throne.

The two were sleeping soundly because they were truly exhausted.

Lotte and Lumi stayed by their side, making sure that no one would disturb their rest.

Somewhere in the plaza, Chuck was busy bragging to the village boys and girls about how he had single-handedly defeated the Goblin High Shaman while everyone was fighting its minions.

His skin was so thick that the looks of contempt given to him by Nessia, Princess Xenia, and Mary seemed to bounce off without leaving a single dent.

But no one berated him.

This was just Chuck being Chuck. They were already used to it.

“And then I went to Alex who was down on one bent knee and gasping for breath,” Chuck said with a devilish smile. “Do you know what he said? He said, ‘Chuck, please, defeat the Goblin High Shaman. You are our only hope.’”

Chuck tossed his hair, and used a wind spell to make his cape flutter behind him, adding flare to his impeccable looks, and pose.

“And I replied, ‘Worry not, I’ll kill that Goblin even if it’s the last thing I do!’” Chuck continued passionately. The village girls and boys looked at him with stars in their eyes. “And then while everyone was doing their best to support me, I unleashed my strongest attack and killed the High Goblin Shaman.

“It was a tough battle, but I only won with everyone’s help and support. So remember kids, when you grow up, you should aim to become like me, okay?”

““Yes, Sir Chuck!””

“Good!”

The members of the Clawford Tribe chuckled after hearing Chuck’s tale. But none of them made any effort to correct or reprimand him.

Even Cairo, who was maintaining his sword, only smiled a little. He did not care that Chuck was taking credit for the defeat of the Goblin High Shaman.

They had come to help the village not for fame, but because it was the right thing to do.

However, he hadn’t expected to reunite with his disciple and sister when accepting this mission.

When the Catkin looked up from his sword, he saw that Elaine and Efa were talking with Fran and Lapiz.

The two students were entertaining their new friends with stories of Alex's life in the academy. Elaine and Efa listened closely, eager to know how he had been spending his time after their parting.

"Blackmail King?" Elaine chuckled. "It seems that he has caused a lot of problems for many people after getting enrolled in Frieden Academy."

"Alex is not a bad person," Fran hurriedly explained. "He's just misunderstood by everyone. Also he only retaliated after his club members were bullied by other clubs."

Efa's smile widened a bit after hearing Fran defend Alex.

During the night when they had shared a lot about each other, Alex had mentioned the names of his Queens to her.

Because of this, Efa went to chat with Fran and Lapiz. They assumed that she wanted to know what shenanigans Alex had been up to. She did not correct them even though her true goal was to get to know the two ladies that Alex had brought up.

Efa could tell that Fran treated Alex as a close friend, while Lapiz seemed to just treat him as an acquaintance of sorts.

'It's a shame that Astrea isn't here,' Efa thought. 'Alex told me that she was a very good singer and dancer.'

She hadn't forgotten her promise to be his wingwoman.

Because of this, she told Fran and Lapiz about the Monster Stampede in the Town of Thaloria and how Alex helped to prevent the town from getting destroyed.

"Alex is really a good person," Fran commented after Efa finished her tale.

"I think I misjudged him a bit," Lapis muttered.

Elaine smiled knowingly at her friend. She didn't mind Efa trying to improve Alex's reputation, especially since she didn't lie or exaggerate what had happened that fateful day.

Back then, the two of them had been fighting for their lives. Just as they had thought that all hope was lost, Alex had arrived with the Clawford Tribe as reinforcements.

A few hours later, when the sun was about to set from the horizon, a giant bonfire was lit in the centre of the plaza.

The upbeat music, rows and rows of magic lamps, and aroma of dozens of dishes all added to the festivity.

Lavinia went to wake Alex and Latifa up because the party would be starting soon.

"Do you feel better?" Lavinia asked as she sat on the bed. Just a look was enough to tell her the young man had mostly recovered from his exhaustion.

"A lot better," Alex answered. "That was a good sleep."

Meanwhile, Lotte was coaxing Latifa to participate in the celebration. After much cajoling, Latifa reluctantly propped herself up.

"I still feel sleepy," she declared.

"You can sleep all you want when we return to the academy," Lotte said with a patient smile. "For now, bear with it for the sake of Alex, okay?"

"Fine." Latifa yawned before allowing her two Alters to take her to another room so that she could change her clothes.

After they left the room, Lavinia finally took this opportunity to ask Alex about something that had been on her mind.

“The power that the two of you demonstrated during the battle, is that the reward you got from the Heracle Mountains Trial?” Lavinia asked.

“Yes,” Alex replied. “It’s called the power of the Verdant Throne.”

“Sounds powerful,” Lavinia commented. “So how did it feel to merge with Latifa? Did it feel weird to have another person inside of you?”

“It felt amazing,” Alex answered before he could even stop himself. “I felt so powerful and invincible.”

Lavinia nodded. His response didn’t surprise her because his fighting ability then had easily surpassed that of a Rank 4 Job Class.

In fact, her brother had noted that Alex was solidly in Rank 5, surpassing even him.

“Hey, is there some kind of condition for that skill to activate?” Lavinia continued. “Does it only work with Latifa or can you merge with others? For example, is it possible to merge with me?”

Alex was a tad taken aback by Lavinia’s unabashed curiosity.

“I don’t know,” Alex answered. “We were only able to do it because we both have a piece of the Verdant Throne. But merging with other people who don’t have it is also possible.”

There were some skills in ELO that allowed hybrid fusions like this. However, there were strict conditions that must be met.

And the majority of people who could merge and fight together belonged to the Church of the Lovers.

A brief silence descended inside the room before Lavinia stood up and helped Alex out of bed.

They could already hear the laughter and the merry-making outside the house, which meant that the party had already started.

“Let’s go before Chuck makes a mess of things,” Lavinia said. “He has already convinced the children that he defeated the Goblin High Shaman to avenge you.”

“Why am I not surprised?” Alex shook his head even as he cracked a smile.

Just like his Master, he didn’t really care about gaining fame from this incident.

He had only picked this quest because it would take him closer to Slime Paradise.

While Alex and Lavinia headed to the plaza, a man in a black cloak arrived at the foot of the mountains.

His steps were soft and even, leaving neither footprints nor sound.

Only true masters could walk so silently.

“I smell the strong stench of blood coming from the mountain,” the man muttered as he tried to identify the owner of the scent. “Goblin blood? Looks like someone raided an entire nest. It must be him...”

Without another word, the man flew towards the mountain top, where the person he was looking for should be staying.

He had traveled such a long way just to see the young man who was currently on the top of the Kill List meant for the younger members of the current generation.