

Endless 411

Chapter 411: A Broken Oath [Part 2]

As tense as the atmosphere was, Alex and Luthor had many things to discuss.

For his safety, Alex asked the old man to remain where he was. Luthor agreed, but he also asked Latifa, Lotte, and Lumi to leave due to the sensitivity of the topic.

Lumi snorted loudly in response, rejecting his proposal for all three of them. To their surprise, Alex also asked them to leave.

“Are you sure about this?” Lotte asked.

Alex nodded. “Yes. I know the three of you are worried about me, but Eiko and Dim Dim will be here and Sir Luthor has already given his word.”

“And what value is his word?” Lumi retorted.

“I believe that he will honor it,” Alex replied firmly.

As someone who followed the Knight’s Code, Luthor would not want to break his oath twice.

Latifa finally agreed, but she secretly asked Lumi to return to keep an eye on the situation.

Unfortunately, a secondary barrier appeared around the cavern, preventing Lumi from entering it again.

This time, it was erected by Luthor, whose defensive abilities were nothing to scoff at even if they were often outshone by his offensive abilities.

As Eiko slept peacefully on top of the black coffin, Alex and Luthor finally faced each other.

“You have good friends,” Luthor commented. “Are they your girlfriends?”

“Not yet, but I’m working on it,” Alex replied honestly, making the old man chuckle.

Now that he was alone with Luthor, Alex decided to wait for the old man to talk first.

“You say that your name is Alex Stratos,” Luthor said calmly. “But you also claim that you are His Highness, Prince Aetherius Alexian Vademont. Is that correct?”

“My name is Alex Stratos,” Alex replied. “But for reasons that I cannot reveal, I believe that I am also Aetherius Alexian Vademont. Sir Luthor, I can only get to the bottom of this with your help.”

Surprise flashed across the old man’s face. Alex continued, “If you tell me that I am not the Prince of Aetherion, then I will believe your words. So let us talk about what we know at the moment.”

“Fair enough.” Luthor nodded. “Now, please tell me why you believe that you are His Highness.”

Alex took a moment to organize his thoughts so that he could tell his version of the story in the most detailed but understandable way possible.

When he had decided how to go about it, he began in a voice both firm and calm.

“Not long ago, a party was held in Frieden Academy,” Alex stated. “There, a young lady called Evangeline Feylune approached me. She asked me if I remembered a ten-year-old girl and it triggered a memory inside of my head.

“Whether this memory belongs to me or not, I can’t really tell. However, in that memory, I found ten-year-old Evangeline lying on the snow during a blizzard. She was outside the gates of the villa that I was staying at, so I hurriedly went to her rescue. I believe that you were there as well.”

Alex then continued his tale about making the girl his maid after saving her life.

He told the old man everything he could remember. But since the memory didn't last that long, his narration ended after a few minutes.

A few minutes of silence passed before Luthor gave his reply.

"What you have said indeed happened in the past," Luthor replied, using his heightened senses to observe the young man's heartbeats and energy for any fluctuations that might indicate dishonesty. "Do you have other memories that you want to share?"

"No." Alex shook his head. "That is the only memory that I remember. Truth be told, I plan to ask Evangeline about it when I return to the academy."

After careful observation, the old man deemed that Alex was telling the truth. There were no falsehoods in his words.

"Now, let me tell you how I lost my Prince," Luthor offered. "When His Highness and I were fleeing from the North, the Paragon of Ice suddenly appeared out of nowhere and attacked us.

"His target was Prince Aetherius, so the two of us clashed. Although he was stronger than me, it didn't take long for him to realize that fighting against me would result in mutual destruction.

"And so he focused his attention on His Highness, who was simply too weak to resist his power. After making a feint to confuse me, he froze the Prince before sending him plummeting off the cliff.

"The shock and anger I felt back then overwhelmed my senses. I entered a semi-berserk phase. I was driven only by the desire to kill the Paragon of Ice or die trying.

"He tried to run away many times, but I activated my domain, which prevented anyone from escaping until one of us was dead. It was a Trump Card that only I knew about. Whenever I used it in battle, I made sure that no witnesses would be left to tell the tale.

"Left with no choice, the Paragon and I were locked in a fight to the death. In the end, I was able to deal the final blow, emerging victorious. But my victory brought me no joy.

“The only thought in my mind was to go down that cliff in order to check if His Highness had somehow survived the fall. The cliff was hundreds of meters tall. When I reached the bottom, only broken ice and cold blood remained.

“I didn’t know if the Paragon’s power could turn a body so brittle that it would shatter with the ice encasing it, leaving no traces behind. All I saw was blood—so much blood that I assumed that the Prince had surely died.”

A sigh escaped Luthor’s lips as he pointed to his eyes.

“You see, I made an oath and this is the consequences of breaking that oath,” Luthor explained. “Some Knight Classes allow us to make an oath in exchange for a boost in our powers.

“I made a vow that I would protect His Highness until he became strong enough to protect himself. Back then, I was very confident... and perhaps arrogant because no one below the Rank of Paragon could defeat me.

“I should have known that overconfidence was a slow and insidious killer. I thought that the Paragon of Ice would honor a one-on-one battle. I was wrong. Sometimes, people cannot be trusted to do the right thing. I was naive and arrogant and I paid dearly for it.

“Don’t get me wrong. This could not compare to what happened to my prince. He was so young... far too young to meet such a tragic end.”

A question popped up in Alex’s head. “If your prince did die when he was thrown off the cliff, why didn’t you lose your sight immediately? If you were able to fight the Paragon, couldn’t the prince have survived the fall?” he asked hopefully.

Luthor sighed. “I wish we could believe that. I didn’t lose my sight instantly after breaking my oath. My vision slowly blurred over the next few days and I used that time to search for my Prince, holding out hope that he might still be alive. Unfortunately, my search was futile.

“Before my vision was truly lost, I journeyed to Slime Paradise and sought asylum. The slimes hid me here in this underground cavern where I ate the moss on the walls and drank from the lake.

“The first weeks posed a real challenge, but gradually, I learned how to navigate the darkness. Slowly, but surely, my senses sharpened until I was able to detect the fluctuations of energy in my surroundings.

“Although this may sound silly, but I could see the essence of the world only after losing my sight. I might be blind now, but I can see things more clearly than ever before.”

Luthor paused for a bit. His excitement was getting the better of him, so he took a moment to calm himself down before continuing.

“After taking a good look at your aura, I realized that it is shockingly like the prince’s,” Luthor said. “It has grown stronger since the last time I saw it. But there are also slight differences as well. Still, in essence, you and the prince have many similarities.

“Frankly, I want to believe that you are His Highness, who has somehow returned back to life. Also... I once sensed Nero’s seal inside of your head, which gives more credibility to your words.”

Luthor then moved to kneel like a knight towards Alex pressing his closed fist over his chest.

Tears started to fall from his clouded eyes because the miracle that he had wished for many years had now appeared in front of him.

“Regardless of whether you really are His Highness or not, I, Luthor Vademont, am glad to see you once more,” Luthor said. “Please, forgive me for not upholding my oath to protect you back then. May your light someday guide the Aetherion Empire to the right path.”

Luthor bowed deeply, as his tears continued to fall.

He had been alone for so many years that he had accepted that he would die alone in the cavern hidden below a lake in Slime Paradise.

But now, a new calling had come to him.

Although he still wasn't sure if Alex was his Prince, it no longer mattered.

Fate had given him a new reason to live and a chance to redeem himself. The promise he had once made to the daughter of his best friend might not be broken after all.

Now, he could properly honor the memory of the poor girl who had died birthing the unloved and unwanted bastard Prince.

Alex looked at Luthor with a complicated expression.

One of his many questions had been answered, but there were still a lot of things that he didn't know.

The young man wanted to know why Prince Aetherius had to flee the empire with only an old knight to protect him from the dangers of the world.

Chapter 412: Leaving Slime Paradise [Part 1]

After their discussion, Luthor and Alex shared a moment of silence to further process all these revelations. After some time, the young man stood up, deciding it was about time he returned to his group.

Alex had already told Luthor everything he knew. There were still too many missing pieces, but even the meagre information he currently possessed was overwhelming. He knew he would need at least a few days to mull over this.

Given the number of missing pieces to complete the truth, he understood that it would take him a few days to understand the meager details he learned about Prince Aetherius.

Just as he was about to take his leave, the old knight made an unexpected request.

"Can I go to Frieden Academy with you?"

Alex blinked, wondering if he had misheard. But after confirming that Luthor truly wanted to come, the young man decided to agree, but with some conditions attached.

First, Luthor must not tell anyone about what they had discussed. This condition could have gone without saying, but Alex was on the edge.

After all, the Demon Worshipers would be the least of their worries if the dead prince of the Empire was actually alive.

Second, the old man must tell Alex more of Prince Aetherius' past. Luthor readily agreed.

Although Luthor was almost certain that Alex was indeed the prince he had failed to protect, a part of him was still doubtful. If he could tell Alex more, maybe the seal would later break and confirm his true identity.

Third and last...

"If you want to stay in the academy, you should talk to the Headmaster and ask for a job. It doesn't matter if it's a gardener or a cleaner."

As long as Luthor becomes a staff member, Alex would have an easier time talking to him—or if needed, ask for help during emergencies.

The old man didn't think much of this condition and agreed.

In any case, the purpose of his stay in the academy was to watch over Alex until the latter's identity was confirmed, and he understood the convenience of being hired as a staff member.

As the former Guardian of the North, Luthor would certainly not struggle with such menial tasks.

Though... Luthor was so skinny that he looked like skin and bones.

Alex was concerned, but Dim Dim assured him that the old man would get all the food he needed to recover his former strength on their way back to the academy.

With the Dim Sum God volunteering to be in charge of Luthor's recovery, Alex gained another helper for his future plans.

Frankly, having Luthor around was like winning the grand lottery prize.

It was like gambling in a gacha banner and getting the rarest, most OP SSR+ Hero within the first ten pull instead of waiting for the two-hundred-pull pity.

'I guess nearly dying was worth it,' Alex mused as he shook Luthor's hand.

Now that they had reached an agreement, the two left the cave together.

Lumi had been trying to get inside the barrier for quite some time, so she immediately noticed Alex and Luthor leaving the underground cavern.

The water slimes also placed a bubble around Alex's and Luthor's heads, allowing them to breathe underwater for a time.

"You're back." Lavinia looked relieved after finally seeing Alex.

As her gaze subconsciously moved toward the young man's bare upper body, her relief faded. Without thinking, she swallowed.

Lavinia wasn't the only one affected. Chuck's hand moved towards his own chest and patted it lightly a few times to feel for the muscles he already knew weren't there.

Unlike his roommate, who had a lean and toned body, Chuck's body lacked muscular definition. The only thing going for him was his handsome face. And his immunity to shame.

“Jealous?” Vaan asked. “You should start working out too, Chuck. I’m sure if you work hard enough, your body will look just as good as Alex’s.”

“You should take that advice yourself, Vaan,” Chuck replied, eager to direct the attention away from himself. “I mean. Just look at you. Even my own mom will think you’re a girl if I introduce you to her. She might even think that you’re my mistress or something.”

Vaan giggled, not bothered in the slightest. Clearly, he took Chuck’s comment as a compliment.

Charles, on the other hand, moved to stand between Nessia and Alex.

Seeing Charles pop up in her view and block out Alex completely, the young lady arched an eyebrow, grinned, and then whispered something in the poor boy’s ear that turned his cheeks red.

But it didn’t take long for them to realize that there was an old, skinny man behind Alex.

“Alex, who is he?” Lavinia asked after having her fill of eye candy.

“His name is Sir Lex,” Alex answered. “He’s gone into closed-door seclusion to gain enlightenment.”

Before leaving the cavern, Alex had asked the old man to create a backstory for his temporary identity.

Amused by Alex’s scheme, Luthor had replied that if someone asked, Alex should just tell them that he was a Martial Artist who had secluded himself from the world in his pursuit for enlightenment.

Looking at his current form, it wasn’t that hard to believe.

His white hair was long enough to touch the ground and his beard had reached his waist. No one would doubt that he was some kind of enlightened master.

This scene would have looked perfectly imposing if not for the baby slimes using his beard as a swing while giggling as happily as a child with a brand new toy.

“Princess, he wants to go to Frieden Academy,” Alex told Xenia. “Can we give him a lift with your airship?”

“I don’t mind,” Princess Xenia replied while looking at the playful slimes on the old man’s beard. “Since the slimes like him so much, it means that he’s not a bad person, right?”

Alex didn’t answer right away, momentarily remembering his near-death experience after getting rough-handled by Luthor.

“Y-Yeah. He is a good person,” Alex answered.

Lumi frowned, but didn’t say anything.

Latifa and Lotte also kept silent, not wanting to get in the young man’s way.

“But... it might not be appropriate for him to go to the academy like this,” Princess Xenia noted, looking troubled.

She had already noticed the old man’s clouded eyes and realized that he was blind. Unsurprisingly, he was as disheveled as a beggar. Maintaining his appearance would have been incredibly difficult even if he hadn’t been stuck in a secret cavern away from everyone else.

Since Xenia was going to bring him to the academy as a guest of some sort, it would weigh heavily on her conscience if she turned a blind eye to his appearance and left him open to disrespect.

Sensing her thoughts, Alex took the initiative to ask the old knight a question.

“Sir Lex, would you like to have your hair and beard trimmed to make yourself look more... neat?” Alex inquired.

“Oh... appearances are indeed important,” Luthor replied. “Can someone lend me a sword? I can cut my hair and beard myself.”

“No need for that, Sir Lex,” Alex stated. “We have a very talented lady with us who can take care of that. If you agree to it, I’m sure she’ll make you look twenty years younger.”

Luthor smiled. “If it isn’t too much trouble, then I would like to ask for assistance. Although I can cut my hair to a more reasonable length, I make no promises that I can make it look decent.”

Alex glanced at Mary, who looked at her Princess expectantly. She only accepted her princess’s commands.

“Mary, please help Sir Lex and give him a haircut,” Princess Xenia ordered.

“Yes, Your Highness.” Mary bowed respectfully.

Alex watched as the maid procured a chair for Luthor to sit on. She then took out a pair of scissors and a brush from her storage ring and started to cut the old man’s hair.

Chapter 413: Leaving Slime Paradise [Part 2]

The baby slimes looked disappointed that they could no longer use the old man’s hair—which now lay limply on the ground—as swings.

However, just a word from Dim Dim and their faces brightened. A second later, they were playing tug of war with Luthor’s hair.

Due to Mary’s expertise, the trimming session finished quicker than expected.

Thanks to her careful trimming, Luthor’s beard was now only about four inches long and far more manageable than before. He also looked much younger than he had been just a day ago.

“You have my thanks, young lady,” Luthor said after Mary had finished fixing his hair and beard. “May I ask for your name?”

“It’s Mary, Sir,” the handmaiden replied as she examined her handiwork.

“Mary... whoever gave you that name must have loved you dearly,” Luthor said softly. “Your name means beloved in the old tongue.”

Mary was a little surprised, but soon broke out into a smile. Her mother had indeed told her that she loved her so much, which was why she had named her Mary.

“I will repay this favor someday, Miss Mary.” Luthor smiled. “May the Arcanas Bless you.”

Mary nodded and returned to Princess Xenia’s side.

“Well then, are you now going back to the academy, Alex?” Princess Xenia asked. “It’s about time that we leave.”

Alex wanted to say that he still had things to do, but after inconveniencing everyone, he decided that he could just return to Slime Paradise during his next field mission.

“Yes, thank you for everything, Your Highness,” Alex answered.

Suddenly, Dim Dim perked up when it saw Eiko moving in their direction.

“Eiko!” Dim Dim greeted its best friend, smiling happily.

Eiko patted Dim Dim’s head before casually unloading a few treasure chests beside her.

“Yours, Dim Dim,” Eiko said.

“Mine?” Dim Dim blinked.

“Un!”

“Yay!”

The little bun then stored the treasure chests inside its dimensional storage while Chuck looked at it enviously.

Seeing the markings on the treasure chests, Alex recognised that they were the treasures that he was looking for.

In fact, there were more treasure chests than he expected, which meant that there were other treasures within Slime Paradise that he hadn't been aware of.

'I'll just ask Dim Dim later if it can share its treasures with me,' Alex thought.

Now that the treasures he sought were safe with Dim Dim, he no longer had a reason to stay in Slime Paradise.

This trip had been more than fulfilling. Meeting Luthor at Slime Paradise was probably the greatest opportunity of his life because he had reunited with his idol.

The old man was a priceless treasure. With his support in the academy, Alex could be even more shameless and brazen than before.

After everyone boarded the ship, Dim Dim gave Eiko one last hug before bidding her goodbye.

“Visit me?” Dim Dim asked.

“Okay.” Eiko nodded. “Soon.”

Dim Dim beamed brightly. Eiko’s promise made it feel better about leaving Slime Paradise.

Once on board the ship, Dim Dim and Alex waved at the baby slimes—who were all waving eagerly back at them—until their arms were sore.

“Bye bye!”

“Bye!”

“Byeeee!”

The girls also waved at the cute slimes, who had made their stay quite fun and comfortable.

“Alex, the next time we meet, I hope you get stronger,” Cairo said.

“I’ll do my best, Master,” Alex replied. “Also, please do things in moderation!”

Alex looked at Elaine and gave her a wink, which made the Swordswoman chuckle.

Cairo pretended that he didn’t understand what Alex was talking about and simply waved his disciple and sister goodbye.

“Alex, I hope to see you again soon,” Efa said with a smile.

“Yes.” Alex smiled back at her. “Please be safe, Efa. Till we meet again.”

Efa nodded before glancing at Lavinia, Latifa, and Lumi, who were all looking at her with guarded expressions.

This made the smile on her face widen a bit as the airship of the Clawford Tribe flew away to head back to their village.

Princess Xenia's airship slowly rose towards the sky and headed towards Frieden Academy.

Alex was truly thankful that they had come to his help. Had it been only him, Lumi, Cairo, Elaine, and Efa, they might not have been able to defeat the Goblin High Shaman and his minions.

The journey was smooth sailing. Alex couldn't help but compare it to the hardships he had encountered while making his way to Oak Village with an invisible Lumi.

Due to Princess Xenia's identity, they were given the VIP Treatment by the cities and towns they passed by. They could even use the teleportation gates reserved for nobles.

This made their travel faster. Within half a day, they were back at Frieden Academy already.

Just as the airship was about to land, the air around them rippled. A second later, Professor Rowan appeared on the deck of the ship.

His eyes were locked on Luthor, whom he had sensed the moment the airship entered the academy's air space.

Despite being blind, it was impossible for Luthor to not "see" Professor Rowan's overwhelming aura.

"Headmaster, is something wrong?" Princess Xenia approached Professor Rowan, who was calmly looking at the old man that they had brought from Slime Paradise.

"Nothing is wrong, Your Highness," Professor Rowan replied. "I just detected the presence of someone not on the academy's database and came here to investigate."

"Oh..." Princess Xenia nodded in understanding.

Recently, many things had happened in the academy. In response, security had been tightened considerably.

She had momentarily forgotten that the old man might not be allowed to enter the academy without some kind of identification or permit from the Headmaster.

Professor Rowan then walked towards Luthor, stopping when he was only two steps away from the old man.

"Would you like to have some tea?" Professor Rowan asked.

"I don't like tea," Luthor replied. "Do you have coffee?"

"I do."

"Lead the way."

Their conversation was short and curt. Both men were calm and direct.

Professor Rowan then snapped his fingers. Before anyone could blink, the two old men vanished from the deck.

Alex wasn't too worried because the Headmaster and Luthor were related. However, the knight had spent years away from other humans. He might give something away without meaning to, and very few things escaped Rowan's notice.

The fewer people who knew about his secret, the safer he would be.

Although Alex didn't mind the Headmaster entertaining the possibility that he might be his long-lost Godson, it would still be best to keep things under wraps, at least until he knew exactly why the Paragon of Ice had been mobilized to kill him.

Chapter 414: I'm Staying Here Whether You Like It, Or Not

Inside the Headmaster's Office, located at the Grand Tower of the academy...

"It's been years since I last saw you," Professor Rowan said. "You look terrible."

"And you still look annoying," Luthor countered while sipping the coffee that the fox-masked young lady had prepared for him.

"Where have you been all this time, Luthor?" Professor Rowan chose to ignore the old man's reply and asked another question. "I thought you were dead."

"As you can see, I'm not dead," Luthor answered. "All this time, I've been living under a rock."

A sigh escaped the Headmaster's lips, knowing this discussion wouldn't go anywhere. Years had passed, but it seemed like Luthor still held a grudge against him for not helping out when the former had been looking for a safe place to hide the prince under his protection.

"It was already too late by the time I heard what happened," Professor Rowan said calmly. "When I arrived, I only saw the remnants of battle. I tried to look for you and the prince, but I found neither of you."

Luthor didn't reply. For him, what happened in the past was no longer important. Instead, he was more concerned about the "miracle" that might have happened.

He had no intention of letting other people know about Alex's secret. Even the Headmaster, one of the Prince's Godfathers, wouldn't be an exception.

The young man's safety depended on everyone believing Prince Aetherius was dead. Revealing he might be alive—even to someone he fully trusted—offered no benefit, especially with his memories still sealed by Nero.

"What do you plan to do now that you've come out of your rock?" Professor Rowan asked.

“Leech off of you, of course,” Luthor answered without hesitation, “is what I’d like to say, but I am not shameless enough. I may be blind, but my skin is not as thick as yours, Rowan. Give me a job and a place to stay here in the academy.”

“What job do you want? Do you want to be a Professor?”

“Too troublesome. Just make me a Gardener.”

“But I already have a Gardener. Four of them.”

Luthor scoffed. “You already have four, so adding one more will not make a difference. I’m staying here whether you like it or not.”

Professor Rowan shook his head helplessly before finally agreeing to this relative’s request.

“Very well,” Professor Rowan stated. “I will let you have a job on paper, but you are free to do whatever you want to do. I’ll also give you a small cottage and a monthly allowance. Now, tell me what happened that day.”

Luthor didn’t answer right away. He quietly finished his coffee before setting his cup back on the table.

“There’s nothing much to tell,” Luthor said. “After leaving the North, we made our way to the South to look for a place to hide. I originally planned to go here with His Highness. With the two of us protecting him, I believe the Empire wouldn’t be able to do anything.

“But they were one step ahead. They scried us and found our location, then they sent the Paragon of Ice to hunt us down. I fought him, but the coward targeted His Highness when he realized that fighting against me would only lead to mutual destruction.

“He turned the prince into a block of ice and threw him off the cliff. As soon as I defeated the bastard, I rushed down to look for the prince, but I only found blood and shattered ice.

"After that, I fled, guilty of my inability to protect His Highness and ashamed of failing to keep my promise to his mother."

Professor Rowan sighed once more after hearing Luthor's statement.

He regretted not being around when the Paragon of Ice came to hunt them down. Had he been there, perhaps things could've ended differently.

But there were no ifs.

They couldn't turn back time, and judging from the way Luthor behaved, he seemed to have accepted it already.

A moment of silence descended upon the room, lasting for a few minutes before the Professor spoke once more.

"Where did you meet my students?" Professor Rowan asked. "I can ask them for information, but let's just save ourselves the trouble of bothering the kids, okay?"

Luthor also knew it was only a matter of time before the Headmaster got hold of the information he needed, so he decided that it wasn't worth it to bother the kids at this time.

"Slime Paradise," Luthor answered. "I've been in Slime Paradise all these years."

Professor Rowan stared straight at Luthor's clouded eyes, which could no longer see. He opened his mouth to speak, but stopped midway.

Any words of consolation would just feel artificial, so he remained silent. There was nothing to be done but accept this as his relative's second chance in life.

"Stay here tonight," Professor Rowan said. "Himea, please guide our guest to the guest room."

The young lady wearing a fox mask materialized beside the Headmaster and bowed respectfully towards Luthor.

“Please come with me, Sir.”

“You can call me Lex, young lady. That’s the name I plan to use now.”

“Understood, Sir Lex.”

Luthor followed behind Himea and left the room, allowing Professor Rowan to have some time alone.

‘Letting him stay in the academy is not a problem,’ Professor Rowan thought. ‘Besides, the only people who can recognize him are those familiar with him from years ago. His appearance has changed so much. As long as I don’t tell anyone, I’m sure that no one will know who he is.’

Luthor had never been this skinny in the past, and he had also aged. No one would expect that such an illustrious figure had become blind, so he’d be safe from identification.

Professor Rowan knew that the last thing Luthor wanted to do was to return to the Aetherion Empire. They celebrated him as a hero, but so what? After the incident with the prince, Luthor had no desire to return, regardless of his title as the Guardian of the North.

A few minutes later, the Headmaster started to pace back and forth inside his office as if something had eluded his mind.

He combed through the details of the situation to pick out what exactly felt odd. Soon, he realized that the center of the incident was Endless Horizon again, and they were likely the ones who prompted Luthor into coming here.

‘Is it a coincidence?’ Professor Rowan thought. ‘Lately, every incident, no matter how big or small, seems to revolve around Endless Horizon. Are they just a magnet for trouble, or is there a deeper meaning behind this chain of events?’

The Headmaster then thought of the young man with short silver hair, who always had Dim Dim perched on top of his head.

The student council president, Theo, had once said that Alex had called Professor Rowan “his uncle”.

The Headmaster smiled wryly after remembering this piece of information.

Professor Rowan dreaded the thought of Alex being his nephew. Right now, the silver-haired young man was just one of his students, yet he was already suffering from headaches.

If they have any deeper relations, the trouble-prone young man would undoubtedly become a source of endless stress and sleepless nights.

Chapter 415: A Contract With The Devil

Alex’s alchemy class had just finished, and when he went out, he was met with a peculiar scene.

Daisy, Dim Dim, and Rex the forest wolf were on their regular patrol—nothing out of the ordinary.

Except for the unexpected addition to their merry group.

With a water sprinkler on hand, an old man walked alongside them. But the amusing part was that Dim Dim and Luthor were both wearing gangster sunglasses.

Since Luthor was blind, Dim Dim thought that giving the old man one of his sunglasses would make him look cool. Luthor was more than happy to accept the little bun’s gift, and he wore it without a second thought despite not knowing what it looked like.

The old man was still new to the academy, so Dim Dim thought it would be a good idea to give him an academy tour. What better way to do it than to follow their regular patrol routes?

For Dim Dim, this was like hitting two birds with one stone!

“Good afternoon, Sir Lex,” Alex greeted the old man. “Good afternoon, Daisy and Rex.”

“Mooooo!”

“Grrrrr!”

Dim Dim blinked once, then twice, before pointing at itself. Clearly, it also wanted to be greeted with a ‘good afternoon,’ just like its friends.

“Good afternoon, Dim Dim,” Alex could only smile at the little bun’s antics. But his greeting made Dim Dim smile happily, making his effort worth it.

“Dim Dim and his friends are kind enough to give me a tour of the academy,” Luthor said. “I got to say, this is indeed a good place.”

Although the old man still looked like skin and bones, having him wear gangster sunglasses made him look like one of those endearing uncles who wanted to impress the younger generation.

“It’s a good place, Sir Lex.” Alex agreed. “Well, then. I still need to go to my other class, so I’ll see you guys later.”

Alex hurried to walk in the direction of the Magic Knight Training Grounds, not wanting to be late.

Luthor didn’t want to give the impression that he and Alex were extremely close, so he asked Dim Dim to continue their tour of the academy.

Just as they were about to head to the gardens, the old man stopped walking, then gazed toward his right side.

Evangeline, who was hurrying to go to the Combat Mage Training Grounds, greeted Dim Dim before walking past them.

The old man didn't say anything, but he clearly sensed that the young lady wasn't a normal human.

'She smells like Nero,' Luthor thought. '... Could it be?'

After a brief hesitation, Luthor asked Dim Dim about the young lady who greeted it.

"Dim Dim!"

"Her name is Evangeline?"

"Dim!"

"... I see."

Luthor was half tempted to run after the young lady and ask her some questions. However, he decided that doing so would be a bad idea.

She still had classes, and the last thing that he wanted to happen was for Professor Rowan to nag at him for harassing one of his students.

"Can you tell me more about her, Dim Dim?" Luthor inquired. "Just the things you know are fine."

Dim Dim paused a bit and told the old man what it knew about Evangeline.

The little bun said that the young lady was one of the newest members of their club, Endless Horizon, and she liked to look at Alex in a subtle way.

"Interesting." Luthor played with his beard as if this was the only information that he needed to confirm his theory. "Okay, let's go back to our patrol now, shall we?"

“Dim Dim!”

And with that, the group of four once again toured around the academy, helping Luthor grow familiar with the campus grounds.

He decided that there was no need to hurry to confirm his suspicions since it might draw unnecessary attention to him.

Professor Rowan had asked him earlier if Luthor could sense the internal aura of a person, which he admitted to.

“Go and find some spies of the Demon Worshipers in the academy,” Professor Rowan said. “You don’t have to capture them. Just remember their aura and help me identify them when you return.”

The Headmaster mentioned that there was a series of events involving the Demon Worshipers, targeting the students of the academy.

Professor Rowan also mentioned that these incidents had implicated the students who had found him in Slime Paradise a few times, prompting Luthor to take this mission seriously.

The last thing he wanted was for the Demon Worshipers to make the life of “His Highness” miserable in the academy, so he planned to root them all out.

Although Evangeline was technically one of them, the old man had other plans.

It wouldn’t be an exaggeration to say that he, Prince Aetherius, Evangeline, and Nero shared a complicated relationship.

He then subtly asked Dim Dim if Alex and Evangeline were close.

Dim Dim's answer was that they weren't that close, but it felt like Evangeline wanted to be close friends with Alex.

'Is this Fate at work?' Luthor mused as he walked alongside his new colleagues. 'Still, it might be advantageous to Alex to form a good connection with Evangeline.'

He could still remember the two children playing together in that remote villa many years ago.

The two had been close, extremely so, and Luthor even entertained the idea that the two of them might become a couple in the future.

However, there was one problem.

It was Nero.

Although he didn't show it on the surface, he cared for his daughter in his own way.

He only permitted Evangeline to stay with them at the villa back then since he had been busy roaming the continent to deal with various matters for the organization.

As they continued their tour, Luthor noticed that several of the students, as well as one Professor, held a very dark, imposing presence.

Clearly, they belonged to the terrorist group that he had been asked to sniff out.

When their tour ended, Dim Dim escorted Luthor back to the Grand Tower before heading towards Fran's farm to eat with its friends.

"Welcome back, Sir Lex," Himea greeted the old man, who had just stepped inside the tower.

"Hello, Himea," Luthor answered before a frown appeared on his face. "Young lady, make sure not to listen to that little devil on your shoulder. It's for your own good."

"Thank you for the advice, Sir," Himea replied. "Would you like to have coffee or tea?"

"Coffee," Luthor answered as he eyed the dark presence sitting on the young lady's shoulder.

His "second sight," which he had honed during many years of blindness, enabled him to see things more clearly than those who still had vision.

He had no idea how Himea could act so perfectly calm in front of him. The devil whispering in her ear had placed ninety-nine chains around her soul, the sign of the contract she had formed with it.

"Does Rowan know about this?" Luthor inquired in passing as he followed behind Himea.

"The Headmaster knows," Himea answered. "He was kind enough to allow me to stay in the academy despite my circumstances."

"I see." Luthor played with his beard. "Is it a one-sided contract?"

The devil that was seated on Himea's shoulder made faces at the blind man, which the latter ignored.

"It is one-sided," Himea answered. "But the one losing out on the deal is The Devil."

"Oh? Did you manage to trick it?" Luthor didn't believe the young lady's words for a minute.

How could he when there were so many chains that were firmly wrapped around the young lady's soul?

It seemed that the Devil was very fond of her and unwilling to let her go.

“Well, the conditions were in my favor,” Himea replied.

The young lady also felt that the old man didn’t believe her words, but she didn’t care enough about him to explain her circumstances.

After leading Luthor back to his room, Himea returned to her own room.

Tonight was going to be a night of suffering for her, but it was the price that she willingly paid to make her wish come true.

“That old man is full of sh*t,” the Little Devil on Himea’s shoulder grumbled.

“Well, it can’t be helped,” Himea answered. “You do have a bad reputation.”

“One-sided conspiracy!” the Little Devil scoffed.

Himea no longer wanted to continue this conversation because the pain was starting to set in. She then lay down on her bed and curled up into a fetal position, enduring the pain that she had inflicted upon herself.

Chapter 416: By The Abyss...

“Finally, classes are over!” Chuck raised both of his hands in triumph as he looked forward to his weekend vacation.

“Are you that happy because you are going fishing with Princess Xenia and Mary... again?” Alex teased.

The happiness that Chuck felt earlier disappeared without a trace. He had completely forgotten about the fishing trip.

“W-What should I do?” Chuck asked, his face turning pale. “Alex, come with me, please!”

“Sorry, but I’ll pass this time,” Alex answered. “I have important matters to do.”

“No! How could you betray me like this?!” Chuck clung to Alex’s arm, making their classmates look at them in surprise. “After sharing the same room with me every night, you’re just going to ditch me like this? How could you do this to me? Is it because you’ve grown tired of me?!”

“O-Oi! You bastard! Don’t purposely say things that can be misunderstood!” Alex tried to pry his arm from the troublemaker’s hands, to no avail. Chuck gripped Alex’s arm like his life depended on it.

“If I am going to fall, we’ll fall together!” Chuck declared.

“What nonsense are you talking about, you fool?!” Alex was starting to feel embarrassed because Chuck was making a commotion and involving him in it.

“Come with me!”

“No way!”

Nessia and Vaan looked at this scene with mischievous smiles. It’s like they knew some secret that only they were privy to.

Sensing that his reputation might once again take a hit if he didn’t do anything about Chuck’s antics, Alex decided to compromise.

“Fine, you can take Dim Dim with you,” Alex stated. “If Dim Dim is with you, you won’t have to worry about not catching anything, right?”

Chuck immediately let go of Alex’s arm and patted his shoulder. “I knew I could count on you, partner. Well, then. See you later!”

Without even waiting for a reply, Chuck quickly left before Alex could change his mind.

Alex sighed, but no longer thought about the matter. He would just have to talk to Dim Dim later and ask it to accompany Chuck on his fishing trip.

The reason why Alex didn't plan to go far from the academy for the time being was that he invited Evangeline to have a proper talk with him.

But knowing that there was nowhere in the academy where they could talk without fearing eavesdroppers, they decided to just meet in the city tomorrow morning.

'This almost feels like we're going out on a date,' Alex thought.

After Nero had spared him, Alex understood that he didn't have to worry about the Vampire Faction of the Demon Worshipers.

He had sensed that Nero held no hostility against him, which meant that he didn't need to be overly wary of Evangeline or Eleanora, whom he had done his best to avoid in the past.

The memory of the girl in the snow and their years together made Alex feel that Prince Aetherius was blessed to have met Evangeline back then.

Because of this, Alex felt a little complicated.

He was starting to feel that something didn't feel right.

How could the Prince be him when he thought that Endless Leveling Online was simply a game?

A game he had played for hours each day over several years.

He had learned so much more about the world of Arcana and fallen in love with it.

He had met amazing people who had become his good friends outside of it.

If it hadn't been for ELO, he wouldn't have met his Guildmaster, Noelle, who treated him as someone... special.

When what he knew and what he was supposed to know clashed against each other, Alex felt helpless.

It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that he was facing an identity crisis.

What first seemed like a playful way to give his Avatar, Alex Stratos, a background story, turned into something that went beyond his comprehension.

Although he still didn't know whether he was truly the Prince of the Aetherion Empire or not, he had no choice but to take things one step at a time.

And for that to happen, he needed to talk with Evangeline. Without the memories of the days that they spent together right before leaving the villa that belonged to her father, the Vampire Lord, Alex could not move ahead.

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"Eleanora, which is better?"

"My Lady, you've already asked me that more than a dozen times already. Both will look good on you. Heck, even if you wore a dress made of leaves, I'm sure everyone would still find it flattering."

Eleanora finally snapped after spending hours helping Evangeline choose a dress for her "date" with Alex in the morning! She had rushed over to her mistress's room because of a command, believing that Evangeline needed her urgently.

It wasn't even really a date!

Alex had simply asked to meet with Evangeline because he wanted to talk to her in private.

The clubroom was out of the question because Latifa had already become its permanent resident.

“But this dress might make Alex think that I’m being too bold, don’t you think?” Evangeline fretted.

The red dress she was talking about showed off an appealing amount of skin. However, Evangeline didn’t want Alex to have the wrong impression of her. She especially didn’t want to come on too strong.

“Then just choose that white dress,” Eleanora commented as she crossed her arms. “You can also wear a big straw hat for that innocent maiden vibe that you seem to want.”

“But the shopkeeper highly recommended the red dress,” Evangeline tried to argue.

“Just pick one already!” Eleanora was tempted to flip the table, but she held back in the end because the table was innocent.

The carpeted floor, the bed, and even the chair were covered with many expensive, fashionable clothes from famous brands. They were everywhere but the closet, where they should neatly be.

Evangeline had asked Eleanora for her opinion, only to repeatedly ignore it. After much back-and-forth, it was down to the sleek red dress or the flowy white one in Evangeline’s hands.

A few minutes of internal struggle later, Evangeline decided to go with the safer option.

Only then was Eleanora finally able to sigh, relieved that the matter was finally settled. She had never thought that fashion could be so excruciating and miserable, but her mistress had done the impossible.

“Then... What accessories do you think complement the dress best?” Evangeline asked. “This earring or this one? How about this bracelet? Or is it too much? Oh, I need to pick a good pair of shoes too.”

“By the Abyss...” Eleanora face-palmed. This was going to be a veeeeery long night.

She wanted to beat the crap out of Alex right now! Just a word from him and she was already suffering so much!

Still, she was Evangeline's handmaiden. Indecisive as her mistress was, this was her duty. Besides, Eleanora also didn't want Evangeline to meet Alex in an attire that she didn't feel fully comfortable in.

'If Alex doesn't compliment my lady's beauty after all of this, I'm going to castrate him even if it's the last thing I do!' Eleanora clenched her fists as she stormed back to her room.

She knew that tomorrow she wouldn't be able to sit still while wondering what Evangeline and Alex were talking about. The solution was, obviously, to follow her Mistress secretly.

'I hope that there will be annoying thugs who will try to test me tomorrow,' Eleanora thought. 'That way, I can finally beat someone up!'

She didn't really understand what was so good about Alex that her lady was acting like a young schoolgirl whenever she thought of him.

'Although Chuck is a bastard, he's still way better than that blackmailer!' Eleanora thought. 'Wait, why am I thinking of that troublemaker now?'

The memory of her defeat brought a burning sensation to her cheeks, but at least Chuck had looked appropriately arrogant and suave. Just for that alone, he was way better than Alex Stratos, whose bounty had once again increased.

Chapter 417: First Date [Part 1]

Alex stood at the meeting place, expecting to wait for the next thirty minutes.

He had set out earlier than he needed to out of habit. In his previous life, his Guildmaster, Noelle, had always appeared half an hour before the agreed meeting time.

The young man was only dressed with casual, basic clothes. And yet, that was more than enough for some ladies to approach him and ask him out.

Naturally, Alex apologized and told them that he was meeting with someone.

Just as he was thinking of buying a snack while he waited, he noticed someone walking toward him from the corner of his eye.

There, in a white dress and a wide-brimmed hat was a beautiful girl who looked awfully familiar to someone he knew.

“Sorry, Alex, did you wait long?” the young lady asked.

The young man momentarily forgot to greet the lady in front of him because he didn’t recognize her!

If she hadn’t called out to him first, he might have thought that she was someone else.

“E-Evangeline?” Alex asked as she came to a stop right before him.

A giggle escaped Evangeline’s lips when she saw Alex’s dumbfounded expression. A part of her was delighted that Eleanora’s prediction—that she would leave Alex speechless—had come true.

“Yes, it’s me, Eva,” Evangeline answered. “Have you been waiting for a long time?”

“No. I just arrived.” Alex lightly patted his chest in a vain bid to calm his heart to calm down.

He knew that Evangeline would look gorgeous if she dressed up. She was already beautiful to begin with, but he usually only saw her in her uniform.

Also, she was sporting a new hairstyle today that made her look angelic.

The perfect example of a young maiden who was going on a date for the first time in her life.

“Um, have you eaten lunch?” Alex asked, doing his best to start a conversation.

“Not yet,” Evangeline replied. “...I was so busy preparing for this date.”

Alex wasn’t able to catch her last few words because her voice was barely above a whisper. “Very well,” he said. “Do you have any preferences? Any dish you’re craving? Any food allergies?”

Evangeline thought for a moment. “I can eat almost anything. I don’t have any food allergies either.”

From a safe distance away, another young lady—who was wearing a mask and glasses—observed them.

After hearing the exchange between the two teenagers, Eleanora was about ready to die of secondhand embarrassment. People who carried themselves so confidently—like Alex and Evangeline—shouldn’t be allowed to be this awkward in conversations!

‘What the hell is wrong with you, Alex?!’ Eleanora clenched her fist. ‘You should compliment her dress first! Damn it! This is basic!’

Unfortunately for the handmaiden, the conversation did not get more exciting. Without any banter or wit, the two quickly settled on eating at one of the city’s most famous restaurants.

‘At least they’re efficient,’ Eleanora grumbled as she followed them.

She was so focused on Alex and Evangeline that she didn’t notice that two other ladies were trailing behind her.

“I knew it,” Lumi muttered. “Tonight, Alex will be sleeping on the floor.”

“... Isn’t this too early to assume anything?” Lavinia commented. “Also, why is Alex sleeping on the floor tonight?”

Yesterday, Lumi had asked Alex out on a picnic with Latifa and Lavinia.

She had been so fed up waiting for her Mistress and her friend to make their moves.

Lumi had even declared that Alex was so immune to romantic cues that even Cupid himself had given up aiming arrows at him.

You could slap him, confess, and cry within a single minute and he would probably offer you a handkerchief and ask if you're hungry.

Of course, Lumi was mistaken.

Alex wasn't that comically or unbelievably dense. In fact, he was well aware of how Latifa and Lavinia felt about him.

While he wasn't a hundred percent sure that they loved him, he was certain that their relationships were on the cusp of tilting into romance.

But after that exciting time at Slime Paradise, Alex had decided to focus on unearthing the identity of "Alex Stratos" first. Remaining ignorant of his background would open him up to dangers he couldn't even see.

"How about we just join Eleanora?" Lavinia suggested. "She seems to be tailing them as well."

"I don't trust her enough," Lumi answered. "Besides, why should I support a thieving cat?"

Lavinia blinked. "Are you talking about me?"

"Of course not," Lumi exclaimed. "Why would I call you a thief?"

"I don't know. But I'm the only cat here."

Lumi stared at her friend for a few moments. "Let's just," she finally said, "follow them and gather evidence of his cheating ways."

Before Lavinia could reply, Lumi was already following Eleanora's footsteps. The vampire had made sure to always be in their targets' blind spots to avoid detection.

Lumi didn't trust Eleanora, but she didn't think it was necessary to do extra work either.

Left with no choice, Lavinia caught up with Lumi. She, too, really wanted to know why Alex and Evangeline were meeting today.

When they finally arrived at the restaurant, Alex asked the waitress to take them to one of the private rooms so they could dine in peace.

Eleanora overheard that. When Alex and Evangeline were safely in the restaurant, Eleanora asked the waitress if she could eat in a private room too.

However, the waitress apologetically told her it wasn't possible because the rooms were not meant for solo diners.

Even though she offered to pay extra, the waitress was firm. Instead, she suggested a table on the balcony.

"Although the balcony is only on the second floor, the view is still charming in its own way," the waitress said with a polite smile.

But was Eleanora here to admire the scenery? No! She was here to prevent her mistress's heart from being charmed away!

Just as she was thinking of what to do next, two ladies—also wearing masks and sunglasses like her—approached the waitress and asked for the private room beside the one that Alex and Evangeline had taken.

The corner of Eleanora's lips twitched. She immediately recognized the Foxkin and the Catkin. It went without saying that they were probably doing the exact same thing as her.

The waitress blinked because the three teenage girls were dressed similarly.

"Table for three?" the waitress asked as she picked up a couple of menus.

The three glanced at each other before nodding their heads at the same time.

An unspoken agreement had instantly formed between the three of them. If their goal was the same, they would be fools not to team up!

As soon as they finished ordering the Group Lunch Package and shooed the waitress out, they stuck their ears against the wall separating them from Alex and Evangeline.

Chapter 418: First Date [Part 2]

"Evangeline, that dress looks really good on you," Alex said with a smile.

He knew that he should have said this when they had first met, but he had been so taken aback by her beautiful appearance that he had momentarily forgotten how to compliment people.

Only after arriving at the restaurant did he finally calm down and praised her.

"It must have taken a lot of effort to do your hair like that," Alex commented, knowing nothing about hair.

"Thank you," Evangeline replied with a smile of her own. "Eleanora helped me pick the dress. She was also the one that styled my hair."

The young lady was so happy it's like she had received the best praise in the world.

Meanwhile, Eleanora, who was eavesdropping, also felt her mood improve. At least, her effort to help dress her mistress up hadn't been in vain.

'At least he knows how to give credit where credit is due,' Eleanora thought as she continued to listen to the conversation in the other room.

Since the Vampire Lady, the Fox Lady, and the Catkin all had superhuman senses, they could somewhat hear what the two teenagers were talking about as long as they concentrated hard enough.

"You also look good, Alex," Evangeline stated. "Like a prince."

The young man didn't know if Evangeline was exaggerating or not, but he still thanked her politely.

(E/N: Evangeline might have never seen a prince in her life.)

But since they were here to find out more about his past and not to chitchat, he decided to take the initiative and ask her the question that had been lingering in his mind.

"Evangeline..."

"Just call me, Eva. Just like how you used to."

"But I'm still not sure if I'm the person that you are referring to, Eva. What if I'm not the person that you think I am?"

"You are Aetherius," Evangeline replied without hesitation. "I am sure of that."

"How can you be so sure?" Alex pressed.

"It's because," Evangeline answered as a blush slowly crept up her cheeks, "I know the taste of your blood. I will never forget its taste because you rewarded me by drinking your blood at least once, or twice a week back then."

"You know the taste of my blood?" Alex frowned.

"Yes." Evangeline nodded. "I managed to take a drop of your blood. I wanted to confirm if you are really my childhood friend."

Alex looked at the young lady in disbelief, unable to remember when she could have done that. "When did this happen?"

"During the sparring match with Jessica," Evangeline answered truthfully. "I made sure to do it as secretly as possible."

"I see." Alex recalled his intense battle with Evangeline. There had indeed been a few opportunities for her to draw his blood during that battle. "And you confirmed after drinking my blood that I am your childhood friend, correct?"

"Yes," Evangeline said confidently.

"But is a drop really enough for you to make a comparison?" Alex pressed. "Don't you need more blood to be certain?"

Evangeline was about to agree, but paused as she wondered if she had really been too hasty. Still, the taste of the Prince's blood was something that she wouldn't be able to forget.

Even if she had only drunk a drop of Alex's blood, she was certain that he was her childhood friend.

However, before she could assert that she believed she was right, Alex said something that made her eyes widen in shock.

"If I let you drink my blood, and not just a drop of it, will you be able to ascertain that I am Aetherius?" Alex's gaze was dead serious and Evangeline had no doubt that he was not joking.

"If... and I say if..." Evangeline took a deep breath to calm herself. "If you allow me to drink your blood, then I can be far more certain."

"Good." Alex nodded. "Then I will let you drink my blood. But let's do it after we finish eating, okay?"

"Okay." Evangeline looked very calm on the surface, but deep inside, her heart was just about to break free of her ribcage.

She had been eating blood pills since enrolling in the academy. They had been able to stave off her cravings for blood, but she would be lying if she claimed they were delicious.

The mere thought of drinking Alex's blood with his permission almost made her salivate then and there.

That was when she realized that she had been dishonest to herself. She had repeatedly rebuffed Eleanora's encouragement to drink fresh, warm blood by claiming she had no desire for it. But that was simply not true.

Given that she had been refraining from blood for so long, she understood that there was a chance that she might lose control if she drank Alex's blood, which was very special to her.

Because of this, she decided that sinking her fangs into his neck was out of the question.

If bloodlust overtook her, Alex might not be able to break free from her grasp. There was no question of his life being in danger if he ever found himself in such a situation.

While Evangeline thought of ways to drink Alex's blood safely, the waitress knocked on the door and told them that their order was now ready.

"Come in," Alex said.

With a practiced elegance, the waitress entered the room and placed piping hot dishes before the two diners. She then wished them a wonderful time and left.

Since Evangeline was a Dhampir, she could also enjoy the taste of food.

The human side of her still needed food as sustenance. This also made it easier for her to resist her blood cravings by adding blood pills to her diet.

However, on a deeper level, her nature as a vampire would always seek out fresh blood. Evangeline had fought this desire over the years because she felt like drinking the blood of others would make her a monster.

The only blood that she wanted to drink was Prince Aetherius' blood because it belonged to him.

Her father and Eleanora had tried multiple times to get her to feed on other humans, but she had refused firmly every time.

As the two ate their food, the three girls who were listening to the conversation also heard a knock on their door.

Not wanting their suspicious poses to be judged by the waitress, all of them sprinted back to their seats and pretended they had not just been pressing their ears against the wall.

The spying mission was important, but so was their dignity.

The young ladies wordlessly agreed to halt their mission just long enough for food to be placed on their table.

Among the three of them, the only one who felt guilty for eavesdropping on the conversation was Lavinia.

She didn't really understand most of their conversation, but she did catch that Evangeline had drunk Alex's blood and he was going to let her do it again.

Among the Catkins, there was this ritual to establish brotherly or sisterly bonds between unrelated people. They would drip their blood into a jar of wine before drinking from it.

The participants would then be bound as sword siblings.

Based on what Lavinia had overheard, she assumed that Evangeline wanted to be Alex's sworn sister.

As for Lumi, she was genuinely shocked and confused by the conversation.

People going on first dates usually didn't talk about drinking each other's blood!

Lumi realized there were two possibilities. Either Evangeline and Alex were remarkably open-minded about skipping the first fifteen stages of a relationship or Evangeline was a blood-drinking creature, perhaps even a vampire.

As for Eleanora, her shock eclipsed anything Lumi and Lavinia were feeling.

She knew for a fact how much Evangeline hated drinking blood from humans. Even the thought of doing so was deeply upsetting to her.

Hearing that Evangeline was not appalled by the idea of drinking Alex's blood made Eleanora wonder if there was a deeper meaning to their conversation.

'He spoke of Aetherius,' Eleanora noted. 'Who is Aetherius?'

Eleanora bit her lip as she tried to recall if she knew anyone by that name. She might not have the best memory, but she could still remember most of the names of the people that she had met.

She had been with Evangeline for a long time. As she had always been attentive towards her mistress, she was certain that she wouldn't forget if Evangeline had met someone by the name of Aetherius.

After a while of pondering, she found herself at a dead end, to her immense frustration.

'No matter, I'll just ask My Lady later. But I have to deal with this problem first...' She turned to the two stalkers who had just started enjoying their food and sighed in her heart.

Since Lavinia and Lumi were not the type to waste any food, they ate calmly and quietly while paying close attention to any sound coming from the other room.

Eleanora understood that she must protect her Mistress's identity by preventing the two of them from continuing to follow their targets.

It would be very troublesome if her Mistress suddenly mentioned anything about their organization, which would definitely land her into trouble with Frieden Academy.

Chapter 419: A Promise Under The Stars

After eating at the restaurant, Alex thought that since they were technically out on a date, they should enjoy themselves more before letting Evangeline drink his blood.

Because of this, he took the young lady to some of the attractions in the City of Harmonia. He seemed really prepared, but he only knew about these places because Chuck had listed out all the best dating spots.

Both Evangeline and Alex were not aware that three other ladies were trailing them.

Eleanora had tried to tell Lumi and Lavinia that they should give Alex and Evangeline some privacy. Lumi had scoffed.

"Cheaters don't deserve privacy," the Foxgirl had said with crossed arms. "They deserve to have evidence of their infidelity publicized."

As for Lavinia, she was trying to understand what should be done on a date.

Having multiple partners wasn't uncommon among Beastkins. For them, the stronger the man was, the more appealing he was to the ladies, who wished to birth strong children.

Eleanora was still doing her best to get the two ladies to leave Alex and her mistress alone. But since her strategy wasn't working, she decided to come up with a backup plan, which she planned to use as a last resort.

'As long as My Lady doesn't mention anything about the Demon Worshipers, I'll just follow behind them,' Eleanora thought.

Seeing how happy her Mistress was, Eleanora didn't have the heart to put a stop to her special time with Alex.

Still, she paid close attention to their surroundings because there was still the danger of Alex being targeted by the Demon Worshipers stationed within the City of Harmonia.

In fact, she already noticed a few individuals tailing Alex. She managed to convince them to back away by claiming that she was personally targeting him to avenge her dead subordinates.

Some of the agents reluctantly left, while the others continued to monitor the situation.

Eleanora felt pressured because there was only one of her trying to hold back a group of people who were all secretly following Alex during his date with her Mistress!

'This sucks.' Eleanora clenched her fists in frustration.

The number of Demon Worshipers that were now targeting Alex was now past a dozen.

The only reason why they hadn't attacked was because the young couple was always in crowded areas.

These locations had regular patrol guards managing the safety of the people.

A battle in these places would end badly for the Demon Worshipers, so they held back from attacking Alex directly.

Several hours later, when the sun was finally setting, Alex took Evangeline to the Central Park of Harmonia, which had a viewing platform that offered a breathtaking look of the city.

According to Chuck, the best time to go to the viewing platform was during the evening so that you could catch the city lighting up during the night.

Fortunately, the viewing area also had a lot of people, with most of them being couples.

The three ladies wearing sunglasses and masks stood out from the crowd. Many gave them weird looks as they stalked their targets.

'Please, don't let anything happen until they return to the academy,' Eleanora prayed internally as she paid attention to the growing number of Demon Worshipers coming to the park to target Alex.

There were now over thirty of them. Unlike the three girls, the Demon Worshipers were doing a good job in blending in with the crowds.

Not only was Alex's bounty quite high, the person who could bring his head back to their organization was promised a promotion.

With such lucrative rewards, many Demon Worshipers ignored Eleanora's warning. Some were arrogant enough to tell her that this matter was beyond her interference.

If she wanted to get Alex's bounty, she was free to do so. But she didn't have the right to stop them from doing what they wanted.

Unaware of the people that were targeting him, Alex leaned on the railing and looked at the city.

Evangeline looked at his hands on the rails before looking down at her own hand. She had wanted to take a stroll in the city while holding Alex's hand, but she was too shy to ask for it.

Meanwhile, Alex thought that it would be rude to hold Evangeline's hand so casually.

They had only been acquainted for a short time, so he believed that it was too soon for such a development to happen between them.

As the two teenagers stood side by side, the first stars made their appearance.

Evangeline gazed at the sky, her lips parted slightly, as if to say something.

Alex followed her gaze, his eyes landing on a faint constellation twinkling above the city.

Gathering her courage, Evangeline took a deep breath before speaking her mind.

"Do you see that constellation over there?" Evangeline asked softly, pointing toward a cluster of stars that formed a crescent shape with a smaller glimmer nestled inside its curve. "It's called Veyara's Embrace. My mother used to tell me stories about it."

"Veyara's Embrace?" Alex repeated, curious.

Evangeline nodded, a faint smile gracing her lips. "According to legend, those stars are the souls of two lovers. Veyara, the Moon Priestess, and Kael, the mortal who defied the gods to stay with her.

"When the gods found out, they cursed the two lovers to never see each other again for the rest of their lives. Their curse remained true until Kael drew his last breath. The Moon Priestess mourned the passing of her lover, whom she wasn't able to kiss or hold during his last moment.

“It was then that The Lovers and The Moon decided that this ending was something that they didn’t want to see. Using their powers, they took Kael’s soul and placed it in the heavens so that Veyara would always be able to see him.

“When Veyara’s life ended, the two Arcanas took her soul and placed her beside Kael’s so that they could finally be together. A miracle then happened and Veyara’s soul split to form other stars and became the constellation that we see now.”

From afar, the constellation seemed to be holding a single bright star at its bosom, which was the reason why it was called Veyara’s Embrace.

Alex sighed. “It’s a bittersweet story.”

Evangeline nodded. “This is also why this constellation has become some sort of Patron Deity for lovers separated from each other.

“You know, in the past... when you... I mean, when Aetherius and I looked at the starry sky, we promised that wherever we might be, we would always look at this constellation so that even though we were far apart, we would still be together under the same sky.”

Perhaps after saying her story, Evangeline found more courage and reached out to hold Alex’s hand.

The young man was surprised, but he didn’t move his hand away. In fact, he even held her hand firmly in his own, as if keeping the promise that Prince Aetherius had made to her.

Evangeline looked down at their joined hands, feeling the warmth that was spreading inside of her chest.

“Your Highness...” Evangeline muttered softly as she leaned closer to Alex, resting her head on his shoulder.

Alex didn’t say anything, but continued to hold her hand under the starry sky that had witnessed the promise of two children who had been separated by time and space.

Chapter 420: Please Don't Disappear Again Like Last Time

As the night deepened, constellations appeared one after another, filling up the night sky. Alex leaned close to Evangeline.

The young lady's heart pounded like drums inside her chest, growing stronger and louder with each passing second.

When their faces were mere centimeters away, the young lady subconsciously closed her eyes and braced herself for the kiss she thought would come next.

Eleanora's and Lumi's mouths opened wide, while Lavinia narrowed her eyes.

From their vantage point, it looked like Alex was kissing Evangeline's cheek. In reality, he was just whispering something in her ear.

"Don't open your eyes and act normally," Alex whispered. "Right now, we are surrounded by thirty Demon Worshipers. The majority of them are Rank 3, but there are a handful of Rank 4 fighters among them.

"I don't want to implicate you, so I want to return to the academy alone. Can I trust that you will return safely on your own?"

Alex pulled back and Evangeline opened her eyes. Her initially flustered face was now grim as she met the eyes of the young man who intended to face the Demon Worshipers alone.

This time, she took the initiative to come close and hug him.

"I'll fight by your side," Evangeline said in a volume only Alex could hear. "I will not let them hurt you."

"Don't worry, they won't be able to hurt me." Alex lightly patted her back. "I have a plan."

Evangeline pulled back and observed Alex's face for a few seconds, trying to see if he was telling the truth or not.

Seeing her worry and anxiety, Alex smiled faintly and held her hand to give it a light squeeze.

"Trust me," Alex said, his tone serious despite his smile. "I'll see you back in the academy."

Seeing his determined gaze, Evangeline nodded reluctantly.

"Be careful." Evangeline took a step forward and planted a kiss on Alex's cheek. "That's for good luck. I'll wait for you in the academy."

Eleanora did a fist pump while Lumi clicked her tongue as she recorded this scene using a crystal.

She planned to give this to Latifa later on, serving as evidence against Alex.

On the other hand, Lavinia seemed to be inspired by Evangeline's boldness and started formulating a plan.

Alex didn't know how he should react after being kissed by the beauty in front of him. Although it was only on a light peck on the cheek, that kiss seemed to hold some kind of promise.

A promise he shouldn't break no matter what.

"I will be careful." Alex nodded before walking away.

He had opened his map even before leaving the academy. However, even though he had noticed the Demon Worshipers, he had decided to feign unawareness to avoid alerting them prematurely.

As someone who had thwarted the plans of the Demon Worshipers multiple times, even a simple stroll in the city carried some risk.

If his map could track the unknown members of the underground organization targeting him, it could naturally track the three ladies spying on them as well.

He had simply pretended to not notice them and continued his “date” with Evangeline, understanding that there would be more scenarios like this in the future.

Just to be on the safe side, Alex had taken Evangeline to crowded places, which were being patrolled regularly by the City Guards.

He had been confident that if something had happened, he would have been able to buy some time for reinforcements to arrive.

But now, he decided to face them alone because he had one more ace up his sleeve.

This time, Alex headed to a rather empty area of the park.

The Demon Worshipers followed him without hesitation, believing that an opportunity had finally come for them to get the bounty on the young man’s head.

Lumi and Lavinia, who were also following Alex, noticed a few suspicious individuals hot on the young man’s trail.

Thinking that he might be in danger, Lumi and Lavinia decided to follow him as well.

However, before they could do that, someone grabbed their wrists and stopped them in their tracks.

“Don’t follow him,” Evangeline warned. “He said he has a plan. Let’s just trust him.”

After Alex had left to draw the Demon Worshipers, Eleanora had immediately reunited with Evangeline and informed her about Lumi and Lavinia.

It hadn't taken long for Evangeline to connect the dots. Realizing that they must have seen her kiss Alex, her face had turned beet-red.

But she hadn't had the time to wallow in embarrassment. The two young ladies ran towards Alex, prompting Evangeline to shove her embarrassment to the back of her head and pursue them.

"Let me go, Evangeline," Lumi replied. "Alex is outnumbered. He won't last long by himself."

"Lumi is right," Lavinia stated. "We have to go and help him."

"Do the two of you still not understand?" Evangeline didn't let them go. In fact, she tightened her grip. "Alex is using himself as bait to draw out his pursuers. He's doing this so he can fight them without worrying about our safety."

Lumi frowned and tried to pry off Evangeline's hand. This wasn't her first time seeing Alex face dangerous situations.

The incidents at Oak Village and Slime Paradise were still fresh in her mind.

Two powerful beings had appeared before Alex and could have easily ended his life had they wanted to.

Lumi didn't want Alex to die because she didn't want Latifa to be heartbroken.

At least, that was what she was trying to tell herself, that she wanted to save Alex because she was worried about her Mistress.

Lumi was not aware of it, but she herself didn't want to see Alex die. If he did, she feared she might become as broken as her Mistress.

Using her strength, she was able to free herself from Evangeline's grasp and immediately turned invisible in order to pursue Alex.

Taking advantage of Evangeline's surprise, Lavinia also shook her hand free and sprinted after Alex.

"My lady... please, don't go!" Eleanora grabbed hold of her Mistress. "I beg you, please don't!"

Evangeline bit her lip, fighting the urge to follow after the young man.

He had told her to trust him, so she had allowed him to go. Still, that didn't change the fact that she was very worried about him.

'Alex...' Evangeline thought as she felt her eyes moisten. 'Please, don't disappear again like last time.'

The young lady then covered her face with both of her hands as she held back her tears.

Eleanora hugged her and patted her back.

The young vampire didn't like Alex. She didn't know what he was planning either, but for the first time, she hoped that he wouldn't die at the hands of the Demon Worshipers.

Because if he really did... she would personally hunt those people down and kill them in the most painful way possible.

Eleanora was very loyal to her Master and her Mistress. Nero and Evangeline had helped her during the darkest moment of her life.

Her loyalty wasn't to the organization.

Her loyalty was theirs alone.

To her, Alex was someone Evangeline treasured, so she hoped beyond hope that he really had a good plan to escape the pursuit of the Demon Worshipers, who were now practically salivating at the thought of the bounty and promotion waiting for them.