

## Endless 471

### Chapter 471: I'll Give You A Little Freebie

"Finally it's over." Alex sighed right after closing the door of his room.

He had gotten the answers to his questions during their visit to the Dawn Estate.

'The only thing I need to deal with is the agents of the Demon Worshipers,' Alex thought. 'I already asked the Princess to give me a day off tomorrow so I can handle this matter.'

Alex didn't plan to be passive in the face of this threat. After a discussion with Dim Dim and Lex, Alex decided that staying an attractive target to the Demon Worshipers was a very bad idea.

This was especially true since they had to focus on Renard's upcoming duel against the scions who had challenged him.

With that big event a few days away, Alex planned to clean up the agents in Solara in one fell swoop before they had the chance to target him.

Suddenly, a cold breeze filled his room.

He flinched, certain that the windows had been closed. Where could that wind possibly come from?

As his gaze landed on the windowsill, he saw a creature that was only as tall as an adult's hand.

"Yo!" greeted the little kid, who had devil-like wings and matching horns.

"Hey," Alex greeted back, deciding to match the creature's casual tone despite feeling uneasy.

The two stared at each other for nearly half a minute before the little devil coughed lightly.

“Someone wants to pass you a message,” the little devil said. “He said that the Agents of the Demon Worshipers will have a meeting tomorrow night at the abandoned villa at the western outskirts of the city.

“The roof of that villa is red, so it might be a good idea for you to check it during the day because I’m sure that the color will not be very visible at night. I delivered the message, so I’m leaving.”

“Please wait,” Alex called out to the little devil. “Who asked you to send this message to me?”

“That’s confidential information,” the little devil replied. “Surely, you know that Devils don’t share the information of their clients, right?”

“Are you really a Devil?” Alex asked while walking towards the little guy that was still standing on the ledge.

“In the flesh,” the little devil confirmed, spreading his arms wide as if presenting himself to the world. “I’ll answer one last question before I leave. You’re lucky that someone cares for you. They even asked me to go on an errand to pass this message. You should be honored.”

“I am indeed honored that the great devil has personally come to pass this message,” Alex said carefully. “And since Your Grace has allowed me to ask one more question, may I know if whoever sent you wishes me harm?”

“It’s right for you to be cautious, but I guarantee that this person doesn’t wish for you to come in harm’s way.”

And with that, the little guy then flapped his wings and hovered in the air. It lingered a moment and gave Alex one last glance, as if pondering something.

“I’ll give you a little freebie because my contractor is a good person,” the little devil said. “Death smiles upon us all and all we can do is smile back. But when you look Death in the eye and it blinks first, nothing seems impossible... Even being sent to this world after being blasted out of a cannon is possible.”

The little devil winked, amused by Alex's confusion.

He wanted to ask another question, but the devil turned into a black mist and disappeared from his sight.

All that was left of the devil was a soft chuckle.

Alex stared into the night, trying to sense if his visitor was still around. But even after he opened the map, he could find no sign of any suspicious individuals in his immediate surroundings.

A good distance away, on top of a tower that overlooked his hotel, stood a young lady wearing a fox mask.

A black mist materialized just above her shoulder. A second later, the little devil appeared, already sitting on her shoulder.

"Message sent," the little devil reported. "Did you see his reaction?"

"Yes." Himea smiled faintly. "It was quite amusing."

"You're a strange one, Himea," the little devil commented. "I still don't understand why you need to go through all of this just for Alex."

Himea shrugged. "I've been called strange since I was young. This is nothing new."

"Well, I guess you're right." The little devil nodded. "90 chains left. Are you sure you have enough time?"

The young lady didn't answer. She simply stared at Alex's room before turning into a black mist that swiftly dissipated.

The little devil's question was left unanswered. But it knew that sooner or later, it would be paid in full for granting a wish in exchange for a soul.

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The next day...

After having a strategy meeting with Dim Dim and Lex, Alex took a stroll in the western side of the city.

Lex was following him secretly from behind because there was a chance that the young man might be discovered and interrogated by the Demon Worshipers.

As for Dim Dim, it remained by Chuck's side as he gathered information about the nobles that Renard would be fighting against.

According to Chuck's estimation, there were at least a dozen young men who wanted to fight Renard.

Alex was quite amused by this, but Chuck was not content with unconfirmed intel. He decided he would get to the bottom of things with the help of the Dim Sum God.

'That must be the house that the little devil was talking about,' Alex thought as he walked past a villa with a red roof.

Since it might be the headquarters of the Demon Worshipers in Solara, lingering there was not an option. He continued walking without a second look at the dilapidated villa.

Once he had confirmed his target, all he needed to do was wait for night to come.

Knowing when the agents would start their meeting was quite easy because he had asked Lumi to pay attention to one of the agents called Cliff Hanger.

The moment he received her report that Cliff Hanger had left the hotel, he would begin a secret operation with Lex.

Chapter 472: What Were You Expecting, Pumpkin Juice?

Cliff kept on looking behind his back after leaving the hotel.

The members of their group had decided to leave separately to prevent anyone from getting suspicious.

Since the Frieden students were free to roam the city, there was nothing wrong with him going out at night.

However, Princess Xenia had set a curfew for everyone, expecting all the students to be back in the hotel before ten in the evening.

'Am I being haunted by a ghost or am I just being paranoid?' Cliff wondered as he looked behind him for the umpteenth time.

He couldn't shake the feeling that he was being followed. But no matter what methods he used to check his surroundings, he uncovered no culprit.

Of course, he couldn't possibly know that he was being followed by an expert tracker who could evade any conventional form of detection.

Lumi was currently high up in the sky, using her powers to monitor his every move.

When she had confirmed that her target was heading west, she immediately went to Alex and confirmed his suspicions.

"Thank you, Lumi," Alex said. "Now, please return to the hotel."

"No," Lumi replied. "You plan to do something dangerous again, don't you?"

“It is indeed dangerous, but it is not as dangerous as you think. After all, Sir Lex is going with me on this mission.”

Lumi glanced at the old man who was leaning on a tree. When he sensed her looking at him, he tipped his hat in her direction.

“See?” Alex smiled. “I’m not doing anything too dangerous at this time.”

“Since it’s not dangerous, you won’t mind if I follow you, right?” Lumi insisted. “Don’t worry, I won’t interfere. I’ll just act as a watcher to ensure that no one else will interfere with your plans.”

Knowing how stubborn Lumi could be, Alex reluctantly agreed to her request.

“Alright, but be careful,” Alex said. “If things go according to plan, nothing bad will happen to me.”

Lumi nodded and turned invisible.

Just like she promised, she would not interfere unless the young man’s life was truly in danger.

Now that his targets were in one place, Alex walked confidently to his destination with a Rank 8 Prism Knight behind him.

With such a powerful figure, Alex wouldn’t have to worry about anything even if an Executive of the Demon Worshipers suddenly appeared in Solivane!

Alex opened his map and deselected every filter except for two—enemies and suspicious individuals. These would continue showing up as red and purple dots on his map.

Since he had personally specified that all members of the Demon Worshipers would be represented by red dots, he had to manually change Evangeline’s and Eleanora’s status to allies so that they would appear as green dots.

Without Lex's support, Alex wouldn't have dared to attempt something like this. But now, he had nothing to fear... at least when it came to dealing with the small fries of the Demon Worshipers.

Executives like Nero were still beings that he didn't want to mess with right now.

"Young Master, let me clear the way for you," Lex said as Alex was about to scale a wall.

"Okay." Alex nodded, allowing the old man to jump over the wall before him.

When Alex was on top of the wall, he saw a few collapsed individuals in the compound.

He hurriedly inspected one of them and realized that they weren't dead. They had simply been knocked unconscious.

Alex planned to surrender them to the Saintess of Solara so that his involvement in this incident could be swept under the carpet.

A few minutes later, Lex returned and informed Alex that all the guards had already been neutralized. He even procured a key that led to the villa's basement, where the secret meeting was going to take place.

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Inside the Secret Meeting Room...

"Two days from now, the rest of the students from Frieden Academy will arrive here in Solivane," Paige Turner said.

"We won't be able to act right away because too many people are paying attention to this exchange. However, if we act on the day of Renard's duel, we can easily disguise our attempt to kidnap Alex as a terrorist attack."

“Are you sure that’s a good idea?” Polly Teeshan asked. “The security in the Colosseum will be strict to protect the noble spectators.”

Paige frowned. “If you have a better idea, then go ahead and tell us. As long as we can separate Alex from his peers, we will cooperate with your plan.”

Since all of them had agreed to split the rewards equally, it didn’t matter who came up with the plan.

The only goal was to capture Alex alive and surrender him to the Vampire Lord, who would certainly—or so they believed—turn the young man into a blood bank for the rest of his life.

“I think that we should...” Cliff spoke up.

Everyone glanced in his direction, hoping desperately that he would be able to come up with a solution.

But a minute passed and they were once again left hanging, prompting Stan Dupp to stand up.

He then grabbed the annoying bastard, dragged him out of the room, and beat him up.

Cliff’s cries filled the run-down compound, satisfying the Demon Worshipers and the Readers at the same time.

Suddenly, they heard a loud scream of pain.

At first, they thought that Stan Dupp had gone overboard in beating the crap out of Cliff, but Dan Druff quickly realized that the one screaming was actually Stan.

“Did Cliff fight back?” Gene Pool smirked. “It seems he finally grew a backbone.”

And, just as they expected, the alternating screams of pain from both Stan and Cliff reached their ears.

"The fools! They are really going all out with each other," Al Beback commented. "I'll be back soon. Let me check if they are smart enough to not kill themselves."

The rest of them laughed heartily as he headed out of the room.

But a moment later, Al Beback's body flew past their table and slammed into the wall facing the door.

Immediately, the Agents understood that something terribly wrong had happened.

"Relax, friends."

A carefree young man entered the room and spread his arms wide, smiling at everyone.

"What were you guys expecting?" Alex smirked. "Pumpkin juice?"

As soon as those words left his lips, all the agents lunged at him with weapons drawn and ready to strike.

Chapter 473: The Terror Of An Oathbreaker [Part 1]

None of the agents of the Demon Worshipers expected that their target would waltz into their headquarters with a carefree smile.

Their plan to capture Alex hadn't changed, but after hearing the screams of Stan and Cliff, they understood that they shouldn't underestimate their opponent. If possible, they would cripple him.

It didn't matter if they cut off his limbs as long as they delivered him alive. The bounty on Alex's head would remain the same. All of them would walk out a tad richer and much more famous and respected among their ilk.

It's not like blood banks needed to walk anyway.

So, the moment they decided to attack, none of them held back.

That was their mistake.

A barrier appeared in front of Alex before they could stop their charge. When they made contact with the barrier, all of their attacks were reflected back at them.

Before they realized what was happening, they were sent flying into the wall and crashing down on the floor in pain and disbelief.

“Argh...” Paige rolled to her side, clutching her arm that had been dislocated. With a firm twist, she righted it, but the pain still made her bite her lip until it bled.

Bill Board coughed a mouthful of blood, while Sal Vage groaned and writhed in pain.

The other agents weren’t better off either. Their attacks had not only been reflected back at them but also amplified.

It was then that they noticed the old man standing a few steps away from Alex and eyeing them coldly.

This gaze drained their faces of color. It’s as if they were looking at a predator that had locked on them as his prey.

When a rat had to face a deadly snake, it could only be paralyzed with fear.

Alex had expected that Lex’s reflection ability was good, but he had never expected it to be this good!

‘It’s much better than my own reflection skill,’ Alex thought. ‘I hope one day, I’ll reach a similar level of mastery.’

The old man then casually threw Stan and Cliff on the floor so that they could be together with their friends.

With the students bleeding out and groaning in pain while sprawled helplessly on the floor, Alex decided to intimidate them further.

He summoned his warhammer and demolished the meeting table with a single strike.

The young man then grabbed one of the chairs and sat on it with his right leg crossed over the other.

His hand, resting by his side, was still holding his hammer.

The devilish smile that was plastered on his face made the agents remember that this person was someone who had defeated an Elder of their organization. That was the reason why a bounty had been placed on his head in the first place!

“Relax, friends,” Alex said sweetly. “If you cooperate with me, I’ll let you live. If you don’t cooperate, well, all of you can continue this meeting of yours in the afterlife.”

The temporary leader of the agents, Luke Warm, looked at Alex warily.

“C-Cooperate with you?” Luke asked. “What are you talking about? Why are you doing this to us?!”

Luke still thought that he could reason his way out of this predicament. Catching his drift, his colleague also decided to try using reason against Alex.

“Alex, you have gone too far!” Dan shouted. “How dare you attack your fellow students?! Are you not afraid of the Headmaster?!”

A chuckle escaped Alex’s lips as he looked down at his “fellow students” in disdain.

"It's time for all of you to drop the act," Alex replied. "Also, the one who attacked first wasn't me. It was you guys. I only stood here, remember? Lastly, don't pretend you're the victims here. I know for a fact that all of you here are agents of the Demon Worshipers.

"Of course, you can deny it, but after I surrender all of you to the Headmaster, the truth will come out sooner or later. But life is not all doom and gloom. If you all agree to become my subordinates, you will at least be able to live your lives without too much pain and suffering, you know?"

The students couldn't help but glance at the old man behind Alex.

Lex already looked intimidating enough, but with Dim Dim's gangster sunglasses, he looked like someone who wouldn't hesitate to kill a few students just for fun.

"What kind of cooperation are you talking about?" Polly asked.

All she wanted was to find an opportunity to escape and take revenge on Alex at a later time.

The other agents were thinking of the same thing. If they were really handed to the Headmaster, they knew that they would no longer be able to escape no matter what.

"A cooperation that benefits me, of course," Alex answered. "Also, don't think about running away. I might be nice, but my Guardian is someone who has little patience and mercy for those who wish to kill me."

As if waiting for those words, Lex released the aura of a Rank 8 Knight, fully suppressing the students and making their eyes widen in shock and fear.

A Rank 8 was strong enough to become an executive or an honorable Elder within their organization.

Earlier, they had still thought about escaping. But now, they understood that if the old man really wished to kill them, they would have no choice but to die.

“What do you want?” Luke asked. “Also, are you really going to let us live?”

Their organization wasn't a merciful one. Their hands had also been stained by blood. Even though they were young, they understood that only those with power had the right to dictate the rules.

“First, I will tell you what I am going to do,” Alex said. “All the agents hiding here in Solivane will be rooted out without fail. You guys are the first, but you won't be the last. Since we all attend the same academy, I will not be handing you over to the Headmaster.

“The roles that you are going to play are easy. Each and everyone of you will become double agents. You will regularly update me on any missions or orders given by your higher ups. As long as you do that, all of you can continue living your 'peaceful' lives.

“Oh right, none of you are also allowed to target my club members or acquaintances, whether directly or indirectly. The moment you do...”

Alex made a slicing motion of his hand over his neck and no one thought he was joking.

“Very well, we will cooperate with you,” Luke said through gritted teeth. “But you must promise us that you will not kill any of us.”

“Sure,” Alex answered. “But verbal promises have no value to me. If you are really going to cooperate, you must first allow my Guardian to put an oath on your bodies.”

Lex was still a Prism Knight, but he had received a subclass after failing to protect Alex.

Oathbreaker.

Oathbreakers usually fell into corruption and madness, but they also became stronger. It's as if a limiter sealing their powers had been broken. But this strength was no longer meant to protect others, but to destroy any and all who stood in their way.

Chapter 474: The Terror Of An Oathbreaker [Part 2]

Lex had only managed to overcome the corruption and madness of breaking his oath by going to Slime Paradise.

The natural powers of the place had been enough to suppress the rot and decay of Lex's psyche. Over time, Slime Paradise purified Lex of that corruption.

Now that he realized that his Prince was still alive, the power that he had gained from becoming an Oathkeeper and Oathbreaker merged together and allowed him to reach the peak of Rank 8.

Very few individuals in the world would be able to defeat him now. And, those who could would have to sacrifice themselves in a pyrrhic victory too.

"I will now all bind you with an Oath," Lex said coldly as a dark-red mist oozed out of his body. "Break it and your souls will cease to exist."

The dark-red mist then forced itself inside the teenagers' bodies, making them squirm on the floor and clutch their chests.

"From now on, all of you will serve my Master, Alex Stratos, with your entire being," Lex declared. "You are not allowed to harm his friends or acquaintances whether directly or indirectly.

"Any and all of his orders will be carried out without fail. If you fail to do that, you will slowly wither until even your bones break apart into dust. Any attempt to free yourself from this oath will result in your soul becoming my slave for eternity."

With each word, the teenagers felt as if their souls were being hammered by nails, embedding Lex's ultimatum into them and binding them to him even after death.

Throughout this, Alex remained outwardly calm.

In reality, he had to fight the urge to shudder because he didn't expect that the carefree, outgoing old man that got along so well with Dim Dim and Chuck had truly turned into a demon after he had broken his oath all those years ago.

Still, the pained groans of all the teenagers were music to Alex's ears.

He had tried to come up with ways to avoid conflict with the Demon Worshipers, but he had eventually realized that no matter what he did, they would still come after him out of spite.

Since that was the case, he decided to flip the table and fight back.

He wouldn't allow them to take the initiative. Instead, he would actively hunt them down.

In order to not implicate Evangeline and Eleanora in this mess, he decided to just capture his fellow students and extract all the information he needed from them.

That way, even if this news reached their higher-ups, the two ladies would not be suspected and interrogated.

A few minutes later, the groans of pain stopped as the teenagers fell unconscious.

Lex turned to Alex and bowed. "I'll deal with the guards outside, Young Master. Are you sure that you don't want me to kill them?"

"There's no need to do that," Alex replied. "Just hand the guards directly over to the Headmaster."

As Lex could contact the Headmaster directly and Professor Rowan could instantly travel from Frieden Academy to Solivane, dealing with these captives was not a problem.

Also, the Headmaster might be able to extract some useful information from the Demon Worshipers. There's no point in killing people who were more useful alive than dead.

An hour later, the teenagers started to wake up one by one.

They gazed at their comrades before shifting their attention to the young man that was still seated comfortably on their chair and looking at them with amusement.

“Since all of you are now awake, use any means that you have to recover,” Alex ordered. “We have a curfew, so we must wipe out all the Demon Worshipers here in Solivane and get back before ten so Princess Xenia won’t nag our ears off.”

Left with no choice, the teenagers took out some potions from their storage rings and drank them to recover.

All of them had the strong will to survive, so they decided to put up with Alex for now and listen to his orders.

The young man then questioned them about the identities and hideouts of the Demon Worshipers in Solivane.

After getting a list of names and locations, Alex took out a few masks from his storage ring and tossed it to his new subordinates one by one.

Each of the masks represented an animal in the Chinese Zodiac.

“Now that you have your masks, I will refer to you guys as the Rat, Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Goat, Monkey, Rooster, Dog, and Pig,” Alex declared. “These will be your new identities during our meetings and all of you will be known collectively as the Zodiac. Do you have any questions?”

“Why do I get the pig mask?” Chris P. Bacon asked. “I’m not even fat, just chubby. Who wants to swap masks?”

The others moved away from Chris because none of them wanted to become the Pig.

Alex only chuckled internally because he had given Chris that mask on purpose. How could he possibly not get it when his surname was Bacon?

"I only prepared your masks for now, but I will make an attire just for you guys," Alex said as he stood up. "Don't worry, like I promised, nothing much will change from your way of life aside from becoming double agents."

"Although there will be occasions where you need to carry out orders from me, I will do my best to ensure that these orders will not force you to endanger your lives for my sake. None of you here will be used as cannon fodders."

After hearing the young man's declaration, the teenagers were finally able to breathe a little more easily.

However, they still felt a bit complicated about having to betray their comrades.

"Now, we still have work to do." Alex walked towards the exit of the basement. "Zodiac, let's move out."

That night, Alex, Lex, and the Zodiac raided all the hideouts of the Demon Worshipers.

None of them were able to escape this operation that started shortly after midnight. Alex asked Lumi to inform Princess Xenia that he and his fellow schoolmates had decided to explore the city's night life and might return in the morning.

The Princess was left fuming at the news. Poor Lumi had to try convincing her that Alex and the other students were simply bonding with each other.

When the operation ended, Alex and the members of the Zodiac returned to the Hotel because they didn't want to be there when Lex called for the Headmaster.

Half an hour later, the old knight finished dealing with the rest of the Demon Worshipers and called the Headmaster using a crystal ball. After receiving that call, Rowan immediately travelled to Solivane even though it was in the middle of the night.

"How did you manage to do all of this?" Rowan asked as he casually tossed the unconscious agents into his personal domain.

"A pig told me," Lex replied.

Rowan wanted to roll his eyes, convinced that his friend was hiding something from him.

Although he wanted to ask more questions, the Headmaster knew that it would be like squeezing blood from a stone.

"Don't cause too much trouble here, okay?" Rowan warned. "If people know that you're still alive, the Empire might send someone to ask you to return to their service."

"Good luck to them." Lex shrugged. "My ties to the kingdom were severed the day they hunted down Aetherius. They are not worth my allegiance."

Rowan had also cut ties with the Aetherion Empire, so he understood Lex's position. He saw no need to convince his friend to change his mind.

"Goodnight and sleep tight," he said before taking his leave.

Lex watched him go calmly before making his way back to the hotel.

He could have told the Headmaster about Alex. But he decided that the fewer people who knew about Alex's identity, the safer the young man would be from those who had demanded his death.

"Sleep?" Lex muttered softly. "There's no rest for the wicked."

The old man might have lost his sight, but his senses were sharper than usual. He understood that there were many challenges ahead.

Lex hadn't even asked Alex if he wished to return to the Aetherion Empire to reclaim his birthright.

However, no matter what the young man chose, Lex would stand by his side and make sure that the tragedy that had happened many years ago would not happen again under his watch.

#### Chapter 475: We Can Still Be Friends Despite Differences In Opinion

Exhausted from a long night of battle after battle, Alex slept until noon.

It was his business to begin with, so he had joined Lex in subjugating their enemies. Of course, he only fought those whom he could deal with and left the rest to Lex and the Zodiac.

The twelve teenagers had to vent their frustration and humiliation somewhere. When their comrades showed up, they didn't hesitate to unleash their pent-up emotions and beat the crap out of them.

Since the Demon Worshipers were a group who specialized in scheming and backstabbing, they felt no wrong in pounding their allies into oblivion!

Even Alex couldn't help but clap his hands for his new subordinates. They truly didn't hold back the slightest. Among them, Chris and Luke were certainly the most brutal.

It was as if the two teenagers were beating people who owed them millions of gold coins and refused to pay them back.

When Alex opened his eyes, he found himself hugging a beautiful fox lady in his arms.

Lumi stared straight into his eyes for a few seconds before averting her gaze. A tinge of red could be seen on her cheeks, which Alex found endearing.

Perhaps unable to help himself due to her cuteness, Alex gently planted a kiss on Lumi's cheek, making the latter flinch.

However, she said nothing and merely reciprocated Alex's affection, kissing him back on the cheek.

After that, she turned invisible and returned to her room.

It was very obvious that she had been awake for some time and only stayed because Alex was hugging her in his sleep.

'I thought I would wake up with body pain,' Alex thought. 'Maybe Lumi used some kind of healing magic on me while I was sleeping.'

The young man smiled faintly and decided he would repay Lumi at a later time—perhaps with crepes from one of those pastry shops that seemed to have recently become her new obsession.

Alex took a shower and dressed up properly before leaving his room.

Since today was his day off, he decided to talk to Lex about what had happened yesterday after he and his new blackmailed helpers had returned to the hotel to rest.

Along the way, Alex saw Chuck and Dim Dim chatting with Mary and Princess Xenia.

When Dim Dim saw Alex, the little bun didn't hesitate to jump to his head, landing perfectly with absolute precision.

"Dim Dim!"

"I'm also happy to have you back, Dim Dim."

The Dim Sum God seemed to have sensed that even if it were to perch on top of Alex's head, there would no longer be any problem with it.

Princess Xenia glared at Alex, thinking that he had influenced the other students into trying out some of the "nightly activities" the city had to offer.

At least, she assumed that's what the "bonding moments between students" Lumi had mentioned actually were.

“Good morning, Your Highness.” Alex bowed respectfully. “Good morning, Chuck. Good morning, Mary.”

“Good morning to you too!” Chuck replied happily.

“Good morning.” Mary gave Alex a brief nod.

“The First Years will be arriving tomorrow,” Princess Xenia said with her arms crossed over her chest. “From now on, you and Chuck will also be part of the security team that will ensure that everyone is back before curfew.”

Dim Dim perked up and raised its hand. “Dim Dim!”

“Um, if you also want to join them, feel free, Dim Dim.” Princess Xenia blinked.

This was meant to be a punishment for Alex and Chuck. Alex had broken the rules and Chuck had, well, been getting on the princess’s nerves.

Fortunately, Chuck didn’t mind spending some time with his friend and Dim Dim, so he happily accepted the order.

After pacifying the princess, Alex and Dim Dim went to look for Lex, who was already eating a simple lunch of coffee, ham, and toasted bread in the hotel dining room.

The moment Alex sat on the chair across from him, the old knight gently waved his hand, creating a soundproof barrier that prevented anyone from hearing their discussion.

“Rowan has taken care of the Demon Worshipers we captured,” Lex stated. “To make sure that all the Demon Worshipers in this city had been dealt with, the Headmaster used his ability to extract information from them.

“You can relax now. This city is free from the influence of the organization that wishes to bring you harm.”

The old knight smiled faintly, proud of Alex's decision to take the initiative and wipe out the enemies before they could do anything.

"Good." Alex nodded. "Also, thank you, Sir Lex, for your help. Things might have become more troublesome without you."

Lex accepted Alex's gratitude and took a sip of his coffee. He was quite curious how the teenage boy had identified the agents of the Demon Worshipers.

Of course, he already had a suspicion that Evangeline might have played a role in it. But since Alex wasn't saying anything, he decided not to ask about it either.

"Sir Lex, my friend Renard will be arriving here tomorrow," Alex said. "I'm sure you already know that the nobles of this kingdom have challenged him in a duel. Dealing with teens his age will not be difficult. But if any adults intervene, I hope you can help him out as well."

Lex arched an eyebrow. "According to my personal investigation, the two of you don't really get along well. Have you guys buried the hatchet?"

"Well, about that..." Alex scratched his cheek. "We aren't exactly close friends, but he is one of my club members, and I believe that we can still be friends despite our differences in opinion."

The old man nodded. Even adults didn't always get along with each other, so it's unreasonable and hypocritical to expect teenagers to do so.

"By the way, Young Master." Lex's expression turned serious. "I don't plan on telling Rowan about your current identity. If possible, you should also limit the number of people who know about it."

"The Empire may be far away from the Kingdom of Avalon, but you cannot underestimate its intelligence agency. One slip up, and we will have Inquisitors hot on your tail. It will be best to limit this information even among the people you trust with your life."

Alex knew that the old man was right. For the time being, the only one who knew about his identity was Evangeline.

Even her close aide, Eleanora, had no idea who he really was.

As for Latifa, he believed that she was still in the dark.

However, knowing that Lumi stalked him from time to time, she might have already learned of this secret. After all, everything Lumi saw and heard would simultaneously be relayed to Latifa since they were linked to each other.

“Understood. I will also talk to Evangeline later,” Alex replied.

The two then talked about the upcoming duel between Renard and the nobles.

Lex was quite interested in seeing how strong Renard was because Alex affirmed that his potential was limitless.

Of course, the young man couldn’t possibly tell his Guardian that he knew that Renard would become extremely strong because he was one of the Main Heroes of this world.

After grabbing a light meal, he went to Evangeline’s room and invited her out for a date, which made the young lady very happy.

Unfortunately, Eleanora wasn’t as thrilled as her mistress. In fact, she could only sigh in her heart. In her eyes, Alex wasn’t worthy of the affection of someone as important as the daughter of the Vampire Lord.

Chapter 476: Can I Stay Over Tonight?

The young man felt a prick of pain, which was soon followed by a sense of warmth spreading around his neck.

He gently patted Evangeline as she drank his blood.

They had been forced to postpone this session because of the Demon Worshipers. Now that they had been properly dealt with, he could keep his promise to the young lady, who had helped him in more ways than one.

Alex could feel the young lady's body heating up a bit.

In truth, there were times when Evangeline's hands felt cold to the touch, which was due to her stubbornness to refuse drinking blood for a long time.

It was slowly getting better due to Alex's help. Perhaps one of the side effects of this weekly feeding session was Evangeline's face turning rosier and her skin becoming more radiant.

He could feel how gentle she was as she drank his blood, making him wonder how much she had suffered. She had spent years believing that her childhood friend had died unjustly.

Compelled to give her some kind of assurance, Alex also hugged her a bit tighter.

"Take your time," Alex whispered. "I'm not going anywhere. I won't leave you alone anymore."

Evangeline was surprised by Alex's words, but she also felt something warm spreading inside her chest.

It was as if one of her fears had been finally put to rest. She instantly felt more carefree, like a burden had been lifted from her shoulders.

A few minutes later, Evangeline reluctantly pulled back after curing Alex's injury and licking any traces of blood on his neck.

She was sated and in a state of euphoria, which made her a bit bolder than she usually was.

The young lady lightly cupped Alex's face and kissed his forehead. She then gave his lips a quick peck before resting her head on his shoulders.

A sigh escaped her lips, as she wished that this moment could remain forever.

But she also understood that the world would continue to turn. The young man, whom she cared for deeply, would continue to pursue his goals in spite of the danger.

After drinking Alex's blood, she managed to see his memories of what had happened the night before.

After seeing the discussion between the young man and Sir Lex, she didn't need to be told that she shouldn't reveal his identity to Eleanora.

She listened to Alex's heart and was very happy that it was beating fast because of her.

Eventually, both of their hearts finally calmed down, as they cuddled on his bed.

At that moment, Lumi stuck half her body through one of the walls.

But after seeing that Alex was with Evangeline, she decided to return back to her room and give the Dhampir her own quality time with Alex.

The young man had already removed his mask at Evangeline's request.

Of course, due to Evangeline's heightened senses after drinking the blood of her beloved, she noticed Lumi's presence.

She was also quite thankful that the young lady had decided to not disturb this intimate moment by quietly retreating back to her room.

Lavinia and Latifa.

These were the two ladies who currently hold a special place in Alex's heart. But Evangeline also knew that there would be more like them in the future.

Also, there was one more lady who made her feel a little anxious.

The girl whom Alex had shared a special moment with and was still inside his heart even though they were far apart.

Noelle.

That was her name.

Evangeline couldn't help but feel jealous of her because Noelle had been there when Alex had needed someone the most.

"Alex..."

"Yes?"

"Do you love Noelle?" Evangeline asked.

"I do," Alex answered without hesitation.

Evangeline had told him that she could see his memories from drinking his blood, so there was no point in lying to her.

Also Alex didn't want to lie to her either.

"If... and only if the two of you can be together once more, will you choose her over this world?"  
Evangeline asked.

Alex was quite surprised by this question, so he wasn't able to give his reply right away. He pondered for a bit and wondered if he would choose to return to Earth to be with Noelle or stay in Arcana, a world filled with endless possibilities.

"I... don't know," Alex replied. "I'm sorry."

At first he thought that he could say that he no longer wished to return to Earth. But he just couldn't do it.

A part of him refused to do it.

What he shared with Noelle was something very precious to him.

If he hadn't been sent to Arcana, there might have been a future for the two of them. Perhaps they might have eventually married each other and built a family together.

"It's okay." Evangeline snuggled closer to Alex. "I'm not telling you to forget about her. I know that she's special to you. It's just that... I'm a little jealous because I know that you love her very much."

She subconsciously hugged Alex tighter after remembering her face-off with Noelle in Alex's memory world.

She had felt so real.

She had felt so alive.

It was as if she could reach out anytime to Alex and pull him back to her side and no one would be able to do anything about it.

She seemed to possess some kind of strange power as well. Just remembering that made Evangeline shudder.

Believing that she was cold, Alex wrapped his blanket around the young lady's body and held her tighter.

He then kissed her head and made her feel that she was loved.

"Can I stay over tonight?" Evangeline asked softly.

"Will Eleanora let you stay?"

"She probably won't," Evangeline replied. "But I'll talk to her properly."

"Okay." Alex didn't really mind if Evangeline stayed with him for the night.

He was confident that he would be able to resist her charms and simply hug her to sleep.

His confidence was coming from the fact that he didn't want to be strangled to death by her Father, Nero, who cared for his daughter despite how aloof and indifferent he seemed to be whenever they interacted.

A few minutes later, Evangeline reluctantly left Alex's room to talk to Eleanora about her plan to sleep with Alex for the night.

The young lady partly succeeded with her request.

Half an hour later, Evangeline returned to Alex's room with Eleanora in tow.

"I'm here to make sure that you don't cross a line that you will both regret," Eleanora said firmly.

Alex couldn't help but smile because he appreciated Eleanora's loyalty towards her mistress.

Although Evangeline felt awkward about this arrangement, she still agreed to her handmaiden's condition.

In the end, the three slept on Alex's bed. Evangeline took the middle spot.

She was very happy to be held by Alex in her sleep even though there was a third wheel who was glaring daggers at the young man.

Chapter 477: I Won't Lose

Frieden Academy's airship slowly descended from the sky.

It had finally arrived at the capital city of the Kingdom of Solara, Solivane.

With most of them seeing the city for the first time, the First Years couldn't help but gasp at the majestic sight of the royal palace.

The structure inevitably stood out because its polished dome reflected the sun's rays, bathing and dazzling everyone nearby with golden light.

Its beauty did not lessen when night came. The dome released the light collected in the day and shone like a star.

Renard glanced down on the city, his expression calm and collected.

However, a closer look would reveal his clenched right fist. He wanted to rush into a fight the moment the airship landed.

When they finally reached the port, they found a few people waiting for them.

Princess Xenia, Prince Edward, and those who escorted them to Solivane had all come to welcome their fellow students.

The Student Council of Solara Academy, headed by their President, Matthew McKnight, also stood by, representing and safeguarding the prestige of their institution.

The young man with red hair and green eyes eyed the descending airship with a confident smile on his face.

Since the game plan was to foster stronger ties with Frieden Academy, he must ensure that they would enjoy their stay here.

However, aside from them, there was an unneeded crowd waiting a good distance away.

They consisted of the young nobles of Solara, who had come to check the person who had somehow gained their Saintess's favor.

Renard's love rivals in the game, Emil Milan and Henry Moriz, were among them, and the moment he stepped down from the airship, the young man immediately felt the gazes of the two nobles lock onto his body.

Seeing the two men stare at a particular student, the rest of the nobles followed their eyes and also looked in Renard's direction.

"Is that him?" a noble asked Emil.

"Yes," Emil replied. "He is Renard Vale."

The nobles eyed Renard from head to foot, as if trying to remember everything about him.

After Alex had suggested that Emil and Henry duel Renard, the word had spread like wildfire back in Solara.

However, the nature of the challenge had been exaggerated as it had spread from mouth to mouth.

An originally simple duel had evolved to an apparent match to win Lady Celestria's hand in marriage.

The young nobles, who had once tried to court the Saintess, quickly flocked to the city of Solivane after hearing the news.

If becoming the Saintess's husband was the prize, they were willing to fight tooth and nail to emerge victorious.

The owners of the Colosseum were quite happy, knowing they would make big bucks from this clash.

However, when Alex visited them and demanded a cut of the entry fees collected, the organizers looked down on him and even attempted to kick him out of their office.

But who was Alex?

He was the undisputed Blackmail King of Frieden Academy!

"If you don't want to give me a share of the entry fee, that's fine," Alex declared. "We will just use the Colosseum in Solara Academy. I'm sure their Headmaster and the Head of their Finance Department will be more than happy to get some money."

The big shots of the Colosseum laughed at Alex, thinking that he was just a nobody.

How could a teenager think that he had full control of the fighters of the duel?

Dim Dim looked at these people with pity, thinking they really had no idea what they were talking about.

It wouldn't be an exaggeration to call Alex Renard's manager. And when it came to making profits, he was someone who wouldn't spare a gold coin to pricks who thought that they could look down on him.

So, with Matthew's help, he asked the Headmaster of Solara Academy, Harry Patterson, for permission to use the school's Colosseum.

The Headmaster was more than happy to get sixty-percent of the share in commission and even decided to hold a three-day festival in the academy before and after the duel started.

Recently, a giant chunk of their funds had gone to the renovation of some staff buildings, so this giant source of income was an opportunity that they wouldn't want to miss!

Also, since the high-ranking nobles of Solara were also looking forward to this duel, they collaborated with Alex to create a tournament-style setting.

In fact, this arrangement had already been made several days ago, with Alex advertising that those who wished to join the duel must register for the tournament instead.

Thinking that this was a good opportunity to scout some talents in the Kingdom, even the Duke of Dawn got involved.

Since the father of the Saintess had approved of the event, many believed that he was really looking for a son-in-law!

When the Colosseum's owners heard that the duel would no longer be held in their place, they immediately looked for Alex and begged him to reconsider.

They even offered him a seventy percent cut of the total revenue in order to get on his good side.

But, who was Harry Patterson?

"You dare steal my mone— I mean, our academy's funds?! Courting death!" Harry hollered. And that was all it took to intimidate the Colosseum's owners and send them running like their pants were on fire.

In the end, the organizers could only regret their folly. The blame was on them, acting so arrogantly and chasing away the golden goose who had originally asked for a mere twenty-percent cut on the total profits.

“Please follow us to your hotel,” Matthew said after greeting the First Years. “Her Highness, Princess Xenia and His Highness, Prince Edward, have already ensured that your stay will be comfortable.”

Matthew glanced at Emil and Henry. The two teenagers nodded in understanding, aware that this wasn’t the time to create conflict.

A stage had already been prepared for their duel, and all they needed to do was wait for three days.

The members of Endless Horizon chatted with Renard while Alex made sure that no conflicts arose around this time.

He also guided the students while Dim Dim, who was holding a small flag and a whistle and wearing its gangster sunglasses, was acting like a traffic enforcer and making sure that everyone followed them back to the hotel.

When they were finally inside their respective rooms, Alex, Chuck, and Vaan went to visit Renard.

“How are you feeling?” Chuck asked. “Do you think you can win the upcoming duels?”

“I won’t lose,” Renard replied simply.

Those three words were enough to make his club members understand that he was determined to overcome all the challengers he would soon face and become the victor.

“That’s good to hear,” Alex replied. “Also, please take this letter. Lady Celestria personally asked me to give it to you.”

After hearing the young lady’s name, Renard took the letter with a complicated look on his face.

Knowing that he would need some time alone to read it, Alex and the others left to give him private space to read and digest the Saintess's letter.

Renard read the letter at least three times, just in case he might have missed a hidden message.

He then carefully returned the letter to the envelope before storing it inside his storage ring.

The young man walked toward the window and gazed at the city of Solivane.

A part of him regretted not going with Lady Celestria to Solara, but the other half was happy that he had stayed in Frieden Academy to practice two Martial Arts that had made him more powerful than ever before.

Chapter 478: Not The Hero She Needed, But The One She Deserved

A servant bowed to the Saintess as she reported that the First Years of Frieden Academy had safely arrived at the Soleil Hotel.

"Is he also there?" Lady Celestria asked.

"Yes."

"Thank you." Lady Celestria nodded. "You may take your leave."

The servant bowed even more deeply before leaving the room.

At the moment, Celestria was under house arrest and forbidden from taking a step out of her family's estate. Of course, it wasn't entirely against her will. After all, if she truly wished to leave, no one would be able to stop her.

Not even her father.

She simply followed the flow to avoid complicating the situation further.

Lady Celestria worried that if she were to meet with Renard, she would be painting an even bigger target on him. The last thing he needed was to attract more ire from the nobles. They might even set their pride aside and target him using underhanded means.

Such a situation was preventable by merely staying put, so she decided to leave the estate only on the day of the duel.

She wondered if Alex had already passed the letter of apology that she had written to Renard.

The Saintess told the young man that it was her fault that things spiraled out of control. She said more things in the letter, even asking Renard if he was interested in becoming a Sun Knight who served directly under her.

All Sun Knights in Solara were treated like nobles, for they were the private army of the Temple of the Sun, the Patron Deity of Solara.

Renard's commoner background had shackled him on more than one occasion. He had wanted to rid himself of the label "commoner," which was why Lady Celeste asked him if he was interested in taking her offer.

Back then, Renard had stayed in the academy because he felt that if he were to follow her to the Kingdom of Solara, he might forever think that he had run away from Alex.

He had been treating the silver-haired young man as his rival all this time. Had he left, a seed of doubt might have sprouted in his heart, which would continuously make him feel inferior and develop something akin to a heart demon.

So, he decided to stay and vowed to become stronger than ever.

Lady Celestria looked at the teardrop necklace resting on the palm of her hand.

This was the gift Renard had given her before her return to Solara.

He had bought it after aggressively saving his stipend for many months.

The teardrop pendant made from polished amber shimmered faintly, as if holding a living flame inside of it.

Lady Celestria always wore it even if she was prudent enough to hide it under her dress.

It was an unspoken promise that one day she would need that person's strength and when that time came, he would be one of the shining lights standing with her against the destruction of their world.

The prophecy implied that something catastrophic would happen in the future and that she would need the help of that person to overcome the calamity.

When she had arrived at Frieden Academy, she had thought Alex was that person.

Then Renard had appeared, causing her to forget how to breathe.

She had stood rooted to the spot and had to force herself to snap out of it, unwilling to embarrass herself before him.

Lady Celestria hadn't been able to confirm if Renard was "the one".

He might not be the Hero she needed, but the one she deserved.

Truth be told, Lady Celestria didn't want to marry a noble.

She could choose anyone among her circle to marry and he would be over the moon.

But she wasn't someone who wished to spend her life in ball rooms, opera houses, or hunting parties.

She would rather be with someone who gave her peace of mind and the space to show her true self without worrying about being criticized.

Lady Celestria was far from perfect—she knew this perfectly.

But among everyone she had met, only Renard spotted her imperfections. He never treated her as the Saintess everyone respected and adored, but as Celestria, a normal girl.

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Inside the Soleil Hotel...

"Argh! I lost again!" Chuck sighed as he threw his cards on the table, making Vaan giggle.

"You're pretty bad at this, Chuck," Vaan commented. "Your face shows everything. If you get a good card, you look confident. If you get a bad one, you look frustrated. How can you win when we can read you like a book?"

Dim Dim happily took its winnings, carefully piling up the little chips by its side.

They were all playing poker, and Vaan was the dealer.

So far, the little bun had almost bankrupted its competitors.

"It's best if you give up, Chuck," Alex suggested. "You're out of pocket money."

"I'm not giving up," Chuck declared like a true gambling addict. "I'm going to win this round for sure."

Vaan blinked. "With what money?"

"With my clothes."

Vaan blinked again. "This is not strip poker."

"Why are you getting so worried when only my dignity is on the line?" Chuck retorted. "My clothes are expensive, you know? And expensive things can be exchanged for money. In fact, they can usually be exchanged for a whole lot of money!"

Unsure of how to respond, Vaan turned to the others.

Dim Dim blinked. Charles shrugged. Alex chuckled.

"Since he wants to use his clothes as collateral, then we should just let him do it." Alex smirked before glancing at Princess Xenia and Mary, who were having tea with the ladies of their club.

"I'm just going to say this, but any indecency is not allowed," Princess Xenia declared. "If you no longer have money, then stop gambling. You're going to be a ruined noble if you don't rein in your impulses."

"Besides, we don't like looking at your scrawny body," Mary added.

"Scrawny?" Chuck arched an eyebrow. "That's not what you said when we d—"

Mary's gaze instantly turned murderous.

Smelling gossip, Alex and Vaan tried to pry some details from Chuck.

However, Chuck had decided that it was foolish to keep digging after finding himself in a hole. No, he would play it safe and do as Xenia suggested.

As none of the girls was interested in taking his place at the table, the rest decided to call it quits as well.

“Alex, what do you think of Renard’s chances of winning the duels?” Chuck asked.

“Is it still a duel?” Charles commented. “I heard that they have changed it to a tournament-style setting.”

“Indeed.” Alex nodded. “The Headmaster and I smoothed out the details. For visitors, it will cost twenty gold coins to enter the academy. If they want to enter the Colosseum, that will cost an additional one hundred gold coins.

“Don’t worry. The students of Frieden Academy are exempt from paying. I even reserved our seats in the Colosseum. According to the Headmaster, it can easily fit over fifty thousand people. The gambling houses have also joined the money train, and I will also get a cut from it.”

“Doesn’t that mean that we’re rich?” Chuck flashed a devilish smile.

“Only me,” Alex replied. “I’m not giving you anything.”

“Oh, come on!”

“Get away, you leech!”

The other members could only smile or shake their heads helplessly at the antics of the two troublemakers.

“By the way, where is Renard?” Vaan asked. “Did he leave his room?”

“No,” Chuck answered. “He is meditating in his room. It seems that he doesn’t want to leave the hotel lest the nobles of Solara target him.”

“A wise decision.” Princess Xenia nodded. “Since the duel—errr, tournament starts in three days, he can rest. He’s been training nonstop, after all. Vaan, please look after Renard and ensure he won’t do anything that might hurt himself or the prestige of our academy.”

Vaan glanced at Alex. For him, Alex’s orders superseded those of Princess Xenia even if Xenia technically outranked Alex.

“Please look after him, Vaan,” Alex stated.

Vaan smiled, relieved he didn’t have to offend anyone. “Understood.”

This subtle exchange between the two caught everyone’s attention.

They were not aware that Vaan had pledged himself to Alex and recognized him as his liege.

As the young man’s first knight and an Apostle Candidate, Vaan would be fighting alongside Alex in the many battles to come.

Chapter 479: A Win-Win Scenario

Finally came the long-awaited day.

Once Solara Academy opened its gates, countless visitors flooded in. They all came for the festivities, but many secretly wanted to be the primary source among their friends for what would surely become the talk of the town.

Either way, everyone wanted to know how the tournament that might decide the Saintess’s future spouse would turn out.

Neither the Duke nor the Saintess had confirmed nor denied the rumors. However, the father-daughter pair were spotted heading to the Colosseum. Witnesses did not need to see more before they started yapping.

“Did you see that? Even the Duke has come!”

“The Saintess is beautiful as always. But is it true she has chosen a commoner to be her future husband?”

“The Saintess can marry whom she wants to marry. Who are we to judge?”

“But a commoner of all people... Will that not affect the prestige of her Ducal House?”

As the visitors speculated wildly, the competitors gathered in the underground waiting room of the Colosseum.

Each of them had paid a thousand gold coins just to participate.

The tournament listed no monetary prize and it hadn't been confirmed that the victor would gain the Saintess's hand in marriage either. However, the possibility of marrying the Saintess was too alluring for these competitors to sit the tournament out.

For noble young men who were the second, third, or even fourth sons, this was a good way to promote themselves. They could not inherit most of their families' territories and titles and needed to rely on such opportunities to attract the attention of noble ladies.

Commoners stood to change their lives even more dramatically if they performed well.

Of course, everyone knew that marrying the Saintess was very unlikely, but no one could bring themselves to dismiss this possibility altogether. Being able to wed the representative of their Patron Deity would bring unmatched honor to them and their families.

To Alex's surprise, over two hundred people indicated their interest in joining the tournament.

After a discussion with the Headmaster, Alex had decided that the first round should be a Battle Royale.

Participants would be divided into groups of fifty. The last two standing from each group would proceed to the semi-finals.

To make things interesting, Alex had manipulated the rosters so that Henry, Emil, and Renard wouldn't clash so early.

That way, they would only face each other during the semi-finals, the highlight of the tournament.

After all, they were the most serious among the Saintess's suitors. With one of them gone, the audience would have one less thing to look forward to.

Those who couldn't afford the entrance fee for the Colosseum or arrived too late had to content themselves with watching the battles through the magical projections, but even that would cost thirty gold coins.

Obviously, Alex was the one who had dreamt up this money-making scheme. The Headmaster of Solara Academy hadn't rejected his suggestion, happy to maximize the profits.

To boost their sales, they had decided to hold this event for three days, squeezing the visitors as much as they could.

"Would you like to transfer here, Alex?" the Headmaster of Solara Academy, Harry Patterson, asked with a smile. "I'll handle everything. We need young men who are as flexible and resourceful as you."

Alex smiled faintly but still refused the offer firmly. "I'm sorry, Sir Harry. I have many responsibilities at Frieden Academy and I can't leave them behind."

"That's quite regrettable. But if you change your mind, the door of this place will always be open for you." Harry patted Alex's shoulder.

"Thank you, Headmaster," Alex replied. "Now... How much profit are we looking at?"

Sir Harry showed Alex the amount they had earned so far. The two gluttons exchanged a glance before chuckling evilly.

Alex kept looking at the seven-digit number and nodding in satisfaction. One could never have too much money.

The more money, the better!

"You know, I don't really care who the Saintess marries," Sir Harry admitted. "But are you sure your friend can even reach the semi-finals? I'm sure his competitors will target him during the battle royale."

"Whether he wins or not ultimately depends on his ability," Alex stated. "If he loses here, there's nothing we can do about it."

"I didn't expect you to say that. I thought you would say your friend would win no matter what."

"I believe in Renard, but it will not change the outcome of this tournament. The most I can do is give him favorable match-ups in the semi-finals. But that can only make a difference if he gets there."

Sir Harry nodded in understanding. With so many talented individuals joining the tournament, who could say that there were no dark horses among them?

"It's almost time." Sir Harry looked at his pocket watch. "Go ahead and proceed to the Colosseum, Alex. After all, you're one of the people who have made it possible."

"Alright," Alex replied. "I'll see you later, Headmaster."

After leaving the Headmaster's Office, Alex called out to Lumi, who instantly materialized beside him.

"Have you placed our bets on Renard?" Alex asked.

"I did. The odds of him winning is 1:20."

"Nice." Alex smirked. "If he manages to win, we will earn at least two million gold coins."

"Are you sure about this?" Lumi asked anxiously. "You bet a hundred thousand gold coins."

"I wish I could bet more." Alex sighed. "But the absolute limit for students is a hundred thousand. Lumi, why don't you bet under your name? I'll provide the funds."

"... But aren't you using our club's funds?" Lumi's worries only increased. "If you lose, Latifa will skin you alive."

"Don't worry. We're more likely to win than not," Alex insisted. "Even Dim Dim and Chuck bet on Renard. Nessia is very stingy, but I managed to convince her to bet half of her savings on Renard."

Lumi looked at the young man as if he had gone mad. Everyone knew how frugal Nessia was. If she lost half her savings to Alex's honeyed words, he would have to deal with her wrath after surviving Latifa's punishment.

"Relax. I have this under control," Alex said before handing Lumi a pouch with a hundred thousand gold coins. "Just make a bet under your name. Regardless of what happens, I promise that Latifa will not blame you."

"... Fine." Lumi finally relented and vanished without a trace.

Alex and the academy would also get a cut from the gambling houses. Even if he lost his bet, he would still earn. He made a win-win situation for himself, so there's no need to worry about anything.

Renard's potential loss would only cost him a few hundred thousand max. He would still get a million or two from his profit shares.

And if Renard won, Alex would gain millions.

With such favorable outcomes, how could he possibly not take any chances?

Since the tournament wouldn't start without him, Alex took his own sweet time arriving at the venue.

That way, Lumi would have enough time to go to the gambling house and place her bet.

Alex didn't know that while he was making his way towards the Colosseum, Renard was also heading to the underground waiting room.

Vaan, Charles, and Chuck served as his escorts, ensuring that no one would harm their friend until he stepped into the arena that would decide the fates of more than two hundred hopefuls.

Chapter 480: The Sun Tourney

"Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the Sun Tourney!" Alex said, holding a microphone.

"Today, many young men have gathered to show their prowess and prove their worth. His Grace, Duke Percival and her Excellency, Lady Celestria, are also here to watch the tournament and witness our participants' boldness and resilience!"

Alex gestured to the VIP seats that the academy had prepared for the two distinguished guests.

"Before anything else, let me clarify a few things first," Alex stated. "I'm sure all of you have heard of the rumors about the final victor becoming Lady Celestria's fiancé."

"Hah~ Sorry to disappoint you, but those rumors are false. But don't lose hope! If the future champion does extremely well today, perhaps His Grace and Her Excellency might still consider him!"

Alex then glanced at the participants, who had now all gathered in the arena.

"Many have come for honor and glory, but only one will emerge victorious!" Alex declared. "Everyone, please remember that tens of thousands of people are watching you today. So I hope that all of you will do your best and show everyone a fantastic performance!"

The participants cheered as if to affirm Alex's statement.

Renard remained silent and simply glanced at the VIP seats.

His gaze met the Saintess's and she gave him a small nod.

There was no shortage of observant people in the Colosseum who quickly caught on.

This sparked speculation about their relationship again, reaffirming once more that Renard was the target of all the participants.

"Now that we have gotten the formalities out of the way, let's start the battle royale!" Alex continued. "Everyone aside from Group A, please return to the waiting area! The battle royale will start shortly!"

The participants headed back to the exits that were located in the four cardinal directions of the arena.

The crowd thinned, leaving only fifty people, including Renard.

The incident had made Renard popular, so the nobles paid close attention to him. Knowing this, Alex had strategically put him in Group A to whet the spectators' appetite.

Those in Group A exchanged glances with each other.

No words were spoken, but everyone came to an understanding.

Before they fight each other, they must eliminate Renard first.

Alex knew exactly what the participants were thinking. Admittedly, he was also a little worried about his club member.

But Renard had already received his Martial Arts in advance. It might not be possible to fight twenty people at once, but he could at least think of something while fending for himself.

When everyone was ready to fight, Alex raised his hand.

The Colosseum was packed to the brim inside and surrounded outside. The projections the Headmaster had put up could even zoom in on key moments.

“Battle Royale Start!”

Alex’s voice reverberated within the Colosseum, eliciting wild cheers from the audience.

Just as Alex had expected, Renard was immediately besieged from all sides.

However, the young man didn’t engage his attackers in combat.

No, Renard knew he wouldn’t win against this many opponents at once. So, he charged toward one and used the poor guy’s body as a shield to block the attacks meant for him.

“Sh\*t!”

That was the only thing the pitiful young man could say before a barrage of attacks turned him into particles of light.

A special enchantment had been placed on the arena, which automatically expelled anyone who would receive a death blow.

With the scions of so many noble houses and several prodigies in this battle, the organizers had taken measures to ensure no one would die.

Because of this, the candidates didn't hold back in the slightest and unleashed their killer moves right off the bat.

"That Renard brat is interesting," Duke Percival said with a smile.

The Saintess didn't make any comments, but the hands resting on her lap curled tightly into fists.

She almost shouted at the participants for ganging up on Renard instead of fighting "properly" with each other.

However, she managed to hold herself back and watched the battle unfold.

Renard didn't prioritize fighting.

He either ran, blocked, dodged, or used other fighters to tank the blows meant for him.

The audience laughed after seeing everyone targeting one person. Some cheered for Renard, some told him to surrender before he got hurt, and some laughed because they thought this was exactly what an insolent commoner deserved.

The audience looked at him with pity, admiration, amusement, and contempt. However, Renard didn't give a damn what they were thinking.

He simply did his best to survive, just like what he had always done.

Block, run, hide, punch, kick.

Every move of his was uncannily precise.

If there was a chance to attack, he would attack.

If there was a chance to use others as shields, he would use them as shields.

His breathing was steady and his steps were firm.

In the underground waiting room, the other combatants were also watching his every move.

Some of them, like Emil and Henry, paid close attention to his movements. If they could understand his fighting style, they had a better chance of coming up with a strategy that could defeat him.

The two even placed themselves in his shoes and wondered what they would do to overcome such a situation.

Since both of them were fairly popular for young nobles, Renard's fate might very well become their fate when it was time for them to step into the arena.

For this reason, they had started to think about how they would survive being targeted by everyone.

In just half an hour, Group A was down to eight people.

Everyone was quite surprised that Renard lasted that long, but many believed that he would soon reach his limit.

Unbeknownst to the audience and the other participants, Renard was only faking his exhaustion.

Thanks to Alex, he had learned that there's nothing shameful about lying in a battle! It's also a strategy!. Since he could do that, he did. Sure enough, it worked perfectly to his advantage.

The young man panted for breath as beads of sweat streamed down his face.

Everyone looking at him thought that he truly had reached his limit.

However, every time he saw an opportunity, he would unleash a punch that could shatter bones.

Every punch would find its target, rendering his opponents helpless.

After realizing that fighting Renard in close combat was a mistake, the remaining fighters decided to unleash long-range attacks against him.

But Renard was also prepared for that.

Using the minimum effort so that he could conserve his energy, Renard dodged the long-range attacks to the best of his ability.

Fifteen more minutes passed. Now, all his opponents were panting for breath.

During this critical moment, Renard took a step forward and unleashed the power that he had been hiding from everyone.

With a speed that was faster than a charging cheetah, Renard punched the nearest target and delivered a five-hit combo strike.

With each hit, booms echoed across the arena.

His first target was sent flying, but before that person could even land, Renard was already punching someone else in the face.

The Berserker within him had awakened. And now that his opponents were too exhausted to evade his attacks, all of them fell one by one.

His last opponent was saved only because Alex ended the match the moment there were only two combatants left.

But he was left no less rattled. It was obvious to everyone, including himself, that he had survived not because of his strength but because of the tournament rules.