

Endless 491

Chapter 491: Battle Of The Beasts [Part 2]

Renard had fought many powerful people in the past. Today, he added Melissa to the list.

While she wasn't the strongest lady he had faced in battle, her raw strength wasn't far from Fran's.

The dwarf girl had sparred a few times with Renard and he hadn't won a single time against her.

Fran's strength was the real deal, so seeing another lady come so close to her level surprised him.

However, since he had already fought Fran, he was able to match Melissa's moves even though she was a rank higher than him.

Another loud explosion rocked the arena as Renard rolled to his side to dodge Melissa's deadly blow.

He was clearly at a disadvantage, but he refused to be defeated by anyone in the tournament.

So, he took Alex's advice to heart and used every means available to him to stay in the fight.

In the past, he had been seen as all brawns and no brain. But this time, he was actively finding ways to overcome his current situation.

"Hah! You're better than I expected." Melissa smirked. "I thought that you're just a boy toy of the Saintess."

The corner of Lady Celestria's lips twitched after hearing that provocation. She didn't like thinking badly of people, but she couldn't help but feel that Melissa was actually targeting her with those jabs supposedly meant for Renard.

Renard took a deep breath before taking another fighting stance. Suddenly, an aura erupted from his body.

That was the second phase of his martial skill, Berserker Dragon Barrage [EX].

Melissa smiled faintly as she, too, unleashed her own aura.

“Aura Masters at such a young age,” the Headmaster of Solara Academy muttered. “Both of them are good seedlings... I just hope that they calm themselves down a bit instead of destroying the arena with their reckless attacks.”

The Student Council President, Matthew, nodded in agreement.

Right now, a quarter of the arena was already destroyed. It seemed that more of it would get destroyed in the battle between two Aura Masters.

“Roar with me!” Melissa shouted. “Tyrant Reaver!”

The war axe in her hands hummed as if answering her call. A silhouette of an Earth Dragon materialized behind her, boosting her strength and defense.

Melissa charged at Renard with a wicked grin while the young man also took a step forward to take up her challenge.

Renard braced himself as Melissa came charging in, her war axe brimming with power.

Yet he did not retreat.

His entire body ignited with blue light as the phantom of a dragon coiled around him, scales shimmering like polished gold. He took a step forward, his fists blazing with blue flames and taking the form of a claw.

“Dragon Claw!” Renard roared and the spectral dragon roared with him.

The two warriors collided at the center of the arena.

A deafening boom erupted outward. Cracks appeared beneath their feet and spread swiftly through the arena. From above, the fissures looked like a spider web.

The force alone was enough to lift chunks of reinforced stone from the ground and scatter them about like shrapnel.

Neither backed down.

Neither yielded an inch.

Their clash was so fierce that the entire arena trembled, as if struggling to contain the power of two young Aura Masters who refused to lose.

In the eyes of the spectators, two dragons were fighting for supremacy. One of them was an Earth Dragon known for its superior defense and tenacity.

The other was a Gold Dragon known for its strength and ferocity.

The repeated clashes between these two behemoths devastated the arena.

'The Headmaster isn't going to make me pay for the repairs, right? I think routine repairs should be pretty standard for a colosseum... I'm sure he already budgeted for this.' Alex was starting to feel anxious because he could already tell that after this dance of death, the arena would be nothing more than broken slabs of stone.

And yet, the two fighters didn't give a damn about Alex's wallet or the Headmaster's finances and continued their rampage, roaring like dragons who were trying to beat the crap out of each other.

But in the end, the Earth Dragon managed to spot an opportunity and landed a decisive blow on the Gold Dragon, shattering its body completely.

At the same time, Renard was blown away by the impact and smashed into the barrier that was already showing signs of strain.

The young man fell limply on the rubble. Alex grimaced and Dim Dim covered its eyes. Chuck looked away briefly before deciding that he owed it to his friend to watch the whole match.

“That got to hurt,” Alex said softly.

Dim Dim nodded. “Dim.”

“Not bad, really not bad,” Melissa said before spitting out the blood that had welled up in her mouth during their brutal exchange. “I’m starting to like you, Renard.”

Renard didn’t reply. Instead, he tried to force himself to stand up. His body was hurting all over and his left arm hung slackly to his side.

Blood flowed down his arms and yet his fists were firmly clenched as if he was still raring to fight.

“Don’t give up, Renard!” Alex shouted. “You can do it!”

The other members of Endless Horizon looked at their president as he encouraged Renard.

They knew that the two had many disagreements, but during this important time, Alex decided to give Renard moral support even if that would attract accusations of bias from the spectators.

“He’s a real friend,” Chuck said with a smile. “That’s my bro right there!”

His friends also nodded, appreciating Alex's words. Although he might get complaints later, he still chose to openly support his club member without caring about his reputation.

However, Alex's next words made the smiles on their faces stiffen.

"Renard! I bet all our club funds on your win!" Alex shouted at the top of his lungs. "If you lose, we won't even have money for snacks! Do you want Chuck to sell his body on the streets just so we can survive?!"

Chuck almost coughed out a mouthful of blood after hearing Alex's words. He regretted everything he had said just thirty seconds ago.

"That guy is not my bro!" Chuck shouted. "Damn it! Why do I have to sell my body for the club's sake?! I mean, can anyone even afford me?! Why don't you sell yours instead?!"

The ladies averted their gazes and pretended that they didn't know who Alex and Chuck were as they started to badmouth each other in front of everyone.

The other First Years from Frieden Academy were not spared the embarrassment either. Many of them covered their faces as they wondered if it was too late to transfer schools.

Chapter 492: Battle Of The Beasts [Part 3]

"...Are they always like this?" Prince Edward asked.

"Unfortunately... yes," Princess Xenia replied, sorely tempted to kick the young man beside her down to the commentator's booth so he and Alex could fight each other.

"I almost feel sorry for you."

"Thank you."

Sometimes, Princess Xenia wondered what she had done to deserve this kind of secondhand embarrassment over and over again.

Knowing that she couldn't do anything about it for now, she decided to follow the other students' lead and pretend she didn't know Alex and Chuck.

Deep inside, she knew that she was fooling no one, but she couldn't bear to let go of what little dignity she had left.

Meanwhile in the arena, Melissa burst out laughing. "You have very interesting friends."

Renard wanted to tell her that they weren't his friends. However, he didn't want to waste his strength nor his breath for useless endeavors.

He was already reaching his limit and his vision was already getting blurry. Still, he stood up, held his ground, and prepared for one last attack.

The aura that covered his entire body gathered around his right fist, making it shine brightly.

Despite being stronger than Renard, Melissa had never underestimated her opponent.

For her, the most dangerous beasts were the cornered ones.

There was a famous saying that even a cornered rabbit would bite, and the last thing she wanted was to get bitten by the man that was betting everything on one last attack.

Respecting his determination, Melissa also gathered her aura around her axe until it looked ten times deadlier than before.

The two combatants stared at each other for nearly a minute before they both took a step forward at the same time.

But, just as Renard was about to take his third step, his eyes glazed over and his movement slowed down a bit.

Alex's eyes widened in shock.

Golden lightning crackled around Renard's body as if squeezing it for every last bit of strength.

"Limit break..." Alex muttered.

This was the ultimate ability that Renard had learned at the Heracle Mountain. A power that only manifested when he had reached his limit.

ELO players had nicknamed this ability "plot armor" for obvious reasons.

The world seemed to slow down as Renard took his fourth step.

In the next second, he vanished. Before most of the spectators could register what was happening, a thunderous explosion shook the whole colosseum.

Melissa suddenly grunted in pain as Renard appeared right in front of her and punched her stomach, sending her flying.

The young lady slammed against the barrier, shattering it completely.

Amidst countless gasps and shouts, the Headmaster immediately stood up and pointed at Melissa.

A gust of wind caught the unconscious young lady in midair.

Her face seemed drained of blood, making the red dripping from the corners of her lips even more gruesome. Renard's final blow might have given her some serious internal injuries.

At Harry's command, the gust of wind gently brought Melissa to the medical tent and placed her on one of the stretchers. The medics immediately rushed to stabilise her condition.

Renard remained standing in the arena, his arm still extended before him. It was as if he had been frozen in time after delivering that powerful blow against his opponent.

Golden lightning continued snaking around his body and only disappeared half a minute later.

Alex approached Renard and realized that he had actually fainted standing up. Anxious that his club member might have suffered injuries that he couldn't see, Alex immediately declared the result of the battle.

"Winner, Renard!" Alex shouted as he gestured for the medics to tend to the motionless young man.

The medics carried Renard away on a stretcher, leaving Alex to wrap up the battle.

A sigh escaped the young man's lips as he gazed at what used to be an intact arena.

'Will the Headmaster deduct the repair costs from my share of the profits later?' Alex wondered. He tried thinking of ways to weasel himself out of what would surely be a massive bill before giving up. Given that his club member was responsible for much of the destruction, there was no way he could avoid paying for the arena's reconstruction.

"Don't worry, we already expected something like this to happen."

The Headmaster of Solara landed beside Alex.

"The maintenance workers will handle the repairs," Harry explained. "But it will take them at least twenty to thirty minutes to fix everything."

Alex nodded, hiding his surprise, before informing the audience that there would be a thirty-minute break.

The Earth Mages of Solara Academy arrived at the arena and started piecing it back together with their magic.

While this was happening, the audience was still reeling from the aftermath of the battle.

From start to end, it had been a very straightforward yet thrilling confrontation between two Aura Masters.

Even the ladies who supported Melissa couldn't help but admire Renard for giving his all against an opponent that was stronger than him.

Up in the VIP balcony, Lady Celsetria finally breathed a sigh of relief.

She had nearly forgotten how to breathe due to how intense the battle was.

The Saintess hadn't even noticed how tightly-clenched her fists were. The Duke, on the other hand, had seen her fists trembling on the armrests.

Her nails had even dug deep into her palms, almost breaking the skin. However, this small injury was easily healed by her regeneration ability, which worked strongly during the day.

A few minutes later, Melissa finally regained her consciousness.

She tried to prop herself up into a sitting position, but flinched after feeling a stinging pain in her stomach.

"Please do not move," one of the medics said. "You're hurt pretty badly. We have healed whatever we can, but your body still needs time to do the rest. Please drink this potion to speed up the process."

Melissa gratefully accepted the red potion that was handed to her. As she drank the potion, she felt the pain in her stomach easing up a bit.

She then glanced at the unconscious young man a few meters away from her, who was also being treated by the medics.

Since he was unconscious, they decided to just pour the potion over his body while those proficient in healing magic used their abilities to fix any external injuries that they could see.

Melissa felt conflicted because she hadn't expected that Renard would be able to make a comeback at the last minute.

All she had seen was the young man turning into a golden blur. The next second, she had already been in the air.

The pain had followed shortly. Moments later, she had slammed into the barrier, which had finally broken apart after enduring so many battles.

She had no idea what happened after that because she had blanked out completely.

However, one thing did change.

For the first time since she had left her home, Melissa was on the losing end.

The young lady had always fought against stronger opponents, but she would emerge victorious most of the time.

Although she had recognized that losing to Renard was a possibility, she had also believed that she would be able to beat him in time.

'I lost,' Melissa mused. 'But it doesn't feel that bad.'

Both of them had fought with everything they had. As a fellow warrior, she could appreciate Renard's strong will to win.

'What an interesting fellow,' Melissa thought before shifting her gaze to the VIP Seats.

The Saintess looked back at her, as if sizing her up.

The two ladies didn't exchange any words and yet they seemed to have come to some sort of understanding in regards to the young man, who was lying peacefully on the stretcher after fighting to his limit.

Chapter 493: Unexpected Outcome

Surrounded by explosive cheers from the crowd, the Gallant Knight, Henry Moritz, walked toward the freshly reconstructed arena.

As a fan favorite, he was expected to easily overpower his opponent like Emil had done earlier.

The two were among the most outstanding teenagers of Solara. Many believed that their potential was limitless.

When Henry entered the arena, he saw Gus Hopper with his arms crossed over his chest and one foot tapping the ground incessantly.

His assigned opponent was Emil's teammate from the battle royale.

While Gus wasn't weak, he wasn't threatening enough for Henry to be wary of.

At that moment, Alex was eyeing Gus solemnly.

If not for Dim Dim reminding him that both players were now ready to fight, the young man would have continued looking at Gus like he owed him money.

"Are both of you ready to rumble?" Alex asked, remembering to ease up his tone.

"I was born ready," Henry stated.

"Just start it," Gus replied.

Alex raised his hand and prepared to give the order to fight. He had a guess who would win, but he was still looking forward to how the battle would unfold. Once the duel started, he would know if he was right or wrong.

"Battle Start!"

Henry's sword glinted under the sunlight as he charged at Gus, who was standing with his hands in his pockets.

That was enough to give Henry a bad feeling.

As if to confirm his suspicions, two magic circles expanded in front of Gus.

The Gallant Blade sensed that something was wrong, but since he was only a few meters away from his opponent, he decided to push through with his attack.

Just as everyone thought that Henry would set a new record for having the shortest battle this tournament, a cry of pain escaped his lips before his body turned into particles of light.

"So weak," Gus sneered, not even bothering to look at his two servants who had easily defeated one of the darlings of the crowd.

Standing at three meters tall, two Rank 5 Alpha Crimson Mantises loomed before Gus like bodyguards.

'I knew it,' Alex thought. 'He really is Gus the Reaper.'

Among ELO players, Gus was infamous for his two Alpha Crimson Mantises, which were like the emissaries of death.

They were fast, deadly, and merciless.

The young man was a Summoner who specialized in Mantis-Type monsters. He was one of the stronger antagonists to appear in the early stages of ELO. Players needed to level up a bit before they could defeat him in battle.

“Hey, Mr. Commentator, are you asleep?” Gus mocked. “Shouldn’t you be announcing the winner right now?”

From his self-satisfied expression, Alex knew that Gus was relishing everyone’s shock.

Even Emil, who had teamed up with him in the earlier stages of the tournament, was unnerved by his performance.

“Winner: Gus Hopper!” Alex declared.

All Gus got was scattered applause as most spectators had yet to recover from the sudden turn of events.

“Now that the four battles have ended, I would like to invite the winners to come here and draw a ball from this box,” Alex continued. “The rules are the same as before. You will fight the person who has drawn the same number as you. The next match shall be held after the intermission.”

Gus chuckled as he sauntered toward Alex. Along the way, he looked up at the VIP seats.

His gaze lingered on the Saintess for a few seconds before he shifted his attention back to the box in front of him.

He then reached out to draw a ball, curious who was unlucky enough to become his opponent.

“Two,” Gus said as he looked at the ball in his hand.

“Next,” Alex said while stealing a peek at Emil, who was just behind Gus in the queue.

Although it didn’t show on his face, Emil was hoping that his opponent in the second half of the semi-finals wouldn’t be Gus.

To his relief, the number he drew was one. His breathing relaxed, perhaps a little too obviously.

“You’re so lucky,” Gus commented after looking over Emil’s shoulder.

The Gentle Scholar didn’t say anything and simply stood to the side and waited for Charles to draw a ball.

Since Renard was still unconscious, the last ball left in the box would automatically belong to him.

Charles didn’t care about who he would be fighting against as long as it wasn’t Renard.

After taking a ball, Charles showed it to Alex.

“One,” Charles.

Emil and Charles exchanged a glance as Gus chuckled.

He then looked at the unconscious Renard in the distance before shaking his head.

“My opponent is lucky,” Gus stated. “He won’t get the chance to be defeated by me in the arena.”

The Summoner wasn't worried about Renard despite the power the latter had shown earlier.

In Gus' eyes, none of the participants were strong enough to defeat him. He had complete confidence that his two Rank 5 Alpha Crimson Mantises could easily hack his enemies to pieces.

"We will have a four-hour break before the tournament resumes," Alex declared. "Everyone, feel free to stretch your legs, get lunch, and catch up with friends. Just remember to return to your seats by two in the afternoon."

"Oh?" Gus arched an eyebrow. "Is this favoritism? Do you need four hours to wake my opponent up?"

"Today's schedule was decided well in advance by the organizers," Alex replied calmly. "Since all the participants have just finished their battles, they will need a few hours to return to their peak condition."

"But I'm not tired though?" Gus smirked. "I fought last, but I didn't even get a warm-up."

"Your opinion doesn't matter," Alex pointed out flatly. "The rules of the tournament are set."

Gus shrugged before walking away. "Even if I wait for hours, the result will still be the same anyway."

When the young man faded from view, Emil gave Charles a faint nod before taking his leave as well.

Charles and Alex both glanced at Renard. Their friend was still out cold and they weren't sure whether he would wake up in time for his next battle.

He had gone past his limit when fighting Melissa. Even though his physical injuries had been taken care of, he still needed time to recover his mental strength.

"Don't worry," Charles said. "He'll wake up when it is his turn to fight."

Alex sighed. "He better. I placed all of my money on him."

Charles was about to reply, but he caught sight of Henry walking briskly towards the one of the exits.

His defeat surprised even him, which only made it more embarrassing.

Everyone had expected that his battle would end quickly and easily. And while that was indeed the case, he was ashamed to be the losing party.

All he wanted to do right now was hide from the looks of pity and wallow in his disappointment.

Alex could tell what Henry was thinking, but whatever the Gallant Blade did was none of his business.

He already had his plate full worrying about Charles and Renard, who would be up against powerful opponents.

But he kept telling himself that both of them would be able to pull through.

As they left the Colosseum to have lunch with their friends, Dim Dim whispered in Alex's ear.

"Dim Dim?"

"I guess we can lend it to him." Alex nodded. "I just hope Renard accepts it."

Dim Dim sighed softly. Renard could be really stubborn and tended to reject help, but this was absolutely not the time to be Mr. I-Have-Trust-Issues.

Chapter 494: Good Luck, Man. You'll Need It

"Okay, here's what you need to do later," Nessia said as she and Charles munched on sandwiches and cookies in his hotel room. "If he summons a blizzard, you should..."

As she gave him pointers for his battle later, she fastened a bracelet she had imbued with Rune Magic around his wrist.

“Remember that Emil is someone who likes to play it safe. You can use that to your advantage,” she commented before picking up her half-eaten sandwich.

Charles listened seriously, knowing that Nessia was worried about him.

As a mage, she naturally knew how mages thought when fighting.

In addition, she had been one of the very few spectators to follow the battle between Emil and Adam. This was because she had had the foresight to enchant her glasses.

After an hour of brainstorming and strategizing, Charles finally felt more confident about his upcoming fight. However, there was something that still bothered him.

“Do you think Renard will win against Gus?”

“Only if he listens to Alex,” Nessia replied. “Do you think Alex will let him lose after betting all our club’s money on him?”

Charles chuckled. He didn’t know how Alex intended to wake Renard, but he could already imagine their club president repeatedly slapping Mr. I-Have-Trust-Issues with a paper fan.

But once Renard was conscious again, Alex would surely offer him some advice for his fight against the arrogant Summoner, who was practically walking on clouds after defeating Henry.

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In the Infirmary of the Colosseum...

"What are the two of you doing?" Princess Xenia asked, deadpan.

Alex and Dim Dim were scribbling on Renard's face with black markers while giggling like little kids.

The Dim Sum God had given Renard a curly beard and was admiring its handiwork as Alex drew a worm on the sleeping boy's right cheek.

"You better wipe that off before Renard kills you both after he wakes up," Prince Edward commented.

"Fine." Alex sighed.

"Dim." Dim Dim reluctantly put aside its black marker.

Alex then took out his handkerchief and wiped Renard's face until no evidence was left.

Perhaps he might have rubbed a bit too callously because Renard finally opened his eyes.

"What are you doing?" Renard demanded, instantly on alert.

"Just wiping your sweat away," Alex replied. "You should thank me for taking such good care of you while you were out cold."

Chuck and Vaan laughed, but neither bothered to explain the situation to Renard.

"What about the tournament?" Renard asked. "Did I lose?"

He couldn't recall how his battle with Melissa had ended. He had some hazy memories of throwing one last punch, but that was it.

"You won," Alex replied. "And your next fight will be in three hours. Do you feel pain anywhere?"

Renard propped himself up and inspected his body. He had some minor aches, but he would be fit to fight after three hours.

“Who am I fighting?” Renard asked.

“You’re fighting against someone overpowered,” Chuck answered. “His name is Gus and he is a Summoner. He defeated Henry in less than a minute after summoning two Rank 5 Alpha Monsters.”

Renard frowned after hearing this. He had a good grasp of Henry’s strength, so he understood that his opponent would definitely be difficult to beat.

“Can you defeat two Rank 5 Alpha Monsters alongside their summoner?” Alex asked. “There’s also a chance that Gus can summon more than two Mantises. If you don’t have any method to defeat him, perhaps I can offer some advice?”

“Okay.” Renard nodded. “Tell me how I can beat him.”

Everyone’s eyes widened in surprise. They had all expected Renard to reject Alex’s help!

“Since when did the two of you become buddies?” Chuck eyed Renard and Alex like they were imposters wearing his friends’ appearances. “Did hell freeze over?”

“That’s none of your business,” Renard said before turning his attention back to Alex. “I can’t afford to lose, so if you have any good ideas, I’ll hear them out.”

“It’s really simple, you know?” Alex smiled cockily. “Since your opponent can summon creatures, what’s stopping you from doing the same?”

“ ... ”

“” ... ””

It took Renard some time to process Alex's insanity. "The fact that I am not a summoner?"

However, his club president only chuckled before explaining his strategy to beat Gus in his own game.

When he was done, his club members still looked skeptical but not as much as before.

"Fine. We'll go with this plan of yours," Renard stated. "As long as I win, I owe you one."

"Good." Alex smirked. "Relax. I got you!"

After Renard downed a bottle of healing potion, the teenagers left to get lunch.

Along the way, they came across Duke Percival, Lady Celestria, and their entourage.

Alex's group moved to the side, allowing the nobles to pass without issue.

The Saintess gave Renard a brief nod as she walked past him.

Duke Percival, on the other hand, gave Renard and Alex a long, hard look before catching up to his daughter.

When he was certain that the Duke's group was a good distance away, Chuck patted his chest and smiled at Renard.

"Your father-in-law looks fierce," Chuck commented. "Good luck, man. You'll need it."

Renard ignored Chuck and walked ahead. The others exchanged glances and followed behind the young man who had a determined glint in his eyes.

A few hours later, the Colosseum was once again filled with people.

The upcoming two battles would decide who would qualify for the Final Match that everyone was looking forward to.

Alex made sure to accompany Renard and Charles in the waiting room. Lex was also there, acting as their guardian in case anyone wished them harm.

“It’s time.” The Headmaster of Solara Academy, Harry, nudged Alex, reminding him to head to the commentator’s booth and make his opening remarks.

Emil and Charles both stood up and left the room with Alex.

The Student Council was also present to ensure that the two would not mess with each other before their duel started.

Although they believed that Charles and Emil were both righteous people, it’s better to be safe and sorry.

Alex greeted the audience, who responded with cheers.

Everyone was excited for the battle that would decide the finalists.

Many favored Emil just because he was their fellow countryman.

Naturally, the Frieden students supported Charles. They might be vastly outnumbered by the other spectators, but they intended to make up for it by cheering as loudly as they could.

Chapter 495: Is This His Trump Card?

Having witnessed Henry’s quick defeat, Emil had no plans to make the same mistake of lowering his guard.

When the tournament had just started, he had initially been confident that the two of them would be the ones fighting for the championship.

After all, they were known all over Solara as the Gentle Scholar and the Gallant Blade.

Being recognized as two of the most promising teenagers had admittedly made them complacent. Emil had also believed that his battle with Henry would be legendary.

Unfortunately, that didn't seem to be the case.

The gap between him and Henry wasn't significant, yet Gus Hopper had defeated the latter so easily.

That said, Emil had not conceded defeat in advance.

'No matter. I will win this match and head to the finals,' Emil thought as he focused on his current opponent, Charles Lambert.

He didn't know much about this person despite his efforts to find out more.

Using his charm, he had tried to get some information from the ladies of Frieden Academy, hoping to learn something about his opponent.

Unfortunately, Charles preferred peace and quiet, never chasing the spotlight as Chuck did regularly.

The only significant information Emil had was thanks to Duke Percival. Prior to the fight, the Duke had sent a messenger to Emil, inviting him to a private chat.

"Your opponent is a Void-Touched," Duke Percival had stated. "If you want to win against him, use your strongest attack as soon as the signal drops. If that's still not enough to defeat him, immediately unleash your blizzard and engage him in a war of attrition."

Emil had heard about such mysterious individuals who possessed power far beyond what any ordinary person could wield.

In fact, there was a Void-Touched among the top officials of Solara. Even the King carefully treaded around him, ensuring that their relationship stayed friendly.

When Alex raised his hand, Emil had already circulated the magic power inside his body.

As soon as Alex dropped his hand, Emil would unleash his strongest move to end the fight then and there.

“Battle Start!”

Without a hint of hesitation, Emil’s Ice Magic burst to life.

He was about to unleash the strongest Ice Magic in his arsenal, an attack that would instantly freeze anything—living or not—it hit

“Frigi—”

Before Emil could finish naming his attack, he was forced to cancel it and back away in haste.

He had transformed the ground under his feet to ice, which he used to slide backwards and dodge Charles’ punch, which would’ve hit him had he reacted even half a second later.

‘Looks like both of us planned to finish each other as soon as possible,’ Emil thought through gritted teeth as he channeled ice magic to his hands.

The situation wouldn’t allow him to cast his strongest skill, Frigid Torrent, because he needed to be perfectly still and absolutely focused to do so.

Still, he had a few tricks that he could use to deal with his opponent.

“Glacial Cone!” Emil unleashed a blast of ice and snow in front of him, a sure-fire way to deal damage to his opponent, who kept on trying to close the distance.

The spell washed over Charles’ body, hiding him from view. Some of his supporters gasped, anxious to know what was happening to him.

Just as everyone thought that the young man had been turned into a block of ice, Charles’ voice reached their ears.

“Phoenix Strike!”

The screech of a Phoenix rang as Emil’s Glacial Cone burst apart, revealing a young man covered in blazing flames.

The bracelet on his right wrist was shining brightly as Nessia’s rune magic had activated.

Emil gritted his teeth before stomping his foot on the ground, creating an ice pillar that propelled him upward.

He had watched Charles’ battles carefully. Since when did Charles use flame magic?

‘Is this his trump card?’ Emil thought as he soared high above the arena, preparing to unleash a blizzard that would give him a territorial advantage.

But before he could unleash his spell, he was momentarily distracted by a sight so unusual he wondered if he was dreaming.

Charles flew toward him. From his back had sprouted ant wings that now fluttered so quickly they were blurs.

“Blizzard!” Emil roared as he forced himself to unleash a spell before he had gathered enough magical power.

He knew that if he didn’t cast the spell now, he wouldn’t get the chance to because his opponent was faster than he expected.

The wind picked up as ice and snow started to fall into the arena. But it wasn’t as strong as the blizzard he had conjured during his battle with Adam.

Not to mention, Charles was unaffected by it because Nessia’s bracelet covered his body in a thin layer of flames that was barely visible to the naked eye.

Little did Emil know, Nessia had already researched him and Henry. She had even compiled dossiers on them!

Every single one of the abilities and skills he commonly used in battle had already been analyzed and dissected by the grand strategist of Endless Horizon.

All Charles needed to do was follow the strategy that Nessia had devised.

Left with no choice but to distance himself from his enemy, Emil flew downward, hiding himself within the blizzard to buy time for him to regain his composure and concentration.

However, this was already something that Nessia had anticipated.

Charles hovered in the air and condensed flames on the palm of his hand.

He then took a deep breath, preparing to unleash a trump card he had yet to use during the tournament.

The young man blew an acid breath towards the flame on his hand, sending a jet of sickly green fire cutting through the air.

This corrosive flame spread downward, sparking a chain reaction.

A steam explosion erupted as fire and ice collided, triggering a shock wave that was at least as strong as a cannon blast.

Emil was hit at point-blank range. Unprepared for this attack, he could only grunt in pain as he was blown backward.

Chapter 496: A Future For Just The Two Of Them

Ice shards and corrosive embers sprayed in all directions as the visibility dropped to zero thanks to the superheated water vapor turning into a caustic fog.

But this wasn't a problem for Charles.

His wings fluttered quickly, yes, but not silently. The sound of his wings bounced off his surroundings like a sonar.

This allowed him to pinpoint Emil's location.

The Ice Mage was having trouble breathing. The scalding water vapor that he inhaled burned his throat and lungs.

He knew that he needed to fly upwards to catch his breath and regain his composure.

Unfortunately, as he flew upwards, a shadow fell upon him.

Before he could understand what was happening, Charles' fist crashed into the side of his face, sending him crashing towards the ground.

Charles then flipped over, unleashing a spinning drop kick that hit his opponent on the chest, destroying the arena completely.

Emil's body turned into particles of light and reappeared beneath the medical tent. Medics rushed to treat him.

When the white smoke that lingered in the arena finally dispersed, only Charles remained.

Alex wanted to be happy for his friend's victory, but right now he had the same worry as Harry, whose left eye was twitching.

The arena had just been fixed a few hours ago!

'... This will not be deducted from my earnings, right?' Alex thought.

'Why do these kids like to destroy other people's property so much?!' Harry sighed. 'Are they so reckless because the repair costs aren't coming from their wallets? Damn, I will make Alex foot the bill with his share of the profits! He will not be able to say no to this!'

Since the outcome of the battle was clear, Alex raised his hand and declared the winner.

"Winner: Charles Lambert!"

Nessia stood up and clapped as loudly as she could. She was immensely proud of her boyfriend but also relieved that she had been able to help him win.

Truth be told, the outcome had already been decided before the fighting even began.

Nessia was a very dangerous opponent if she was given enough time to strategize against her enemies.

With Charles executing her plan so perfectly, there had simply been no way for Emil to make a comeback.

However, Nessia had still watched the battle with her heart in her throat, worried that the battle might develop in a direction she had not anticipated. Now that Charles was out of harm's way, she was openly rejoicing.

After Harry confirmed that the acrid smoke was completely gone, the Earth Mages came to fix the arena.

While they had repaired the arena many times in the past, the process was still not instantaneous.

"They are just delaying the inevitable," Gus commented as he watched the aftermath of the battle through the magical projection in the waiting room.

Renard didn't pay him any heed and continued to meditate in order to stabilize his mind.

Similar to Charles, Renard had also received some advice from Alex.

Although Renard wasn't certain if this strategy would really work, he decided to trust the young man for the time being.

Defeating a Summoner with two Rank 5 Alpha Monsters wasn't an easy task.

Renard couldn't assume that Gus could only summon two Alpha Crimson Mantises either. If Gus could summon more, Renard's odds of winning would drop dramatically.

As the arena was being fixed, Alex entertained the crowd with a dramatic account of how the Saintess and Renard had met at Frieden Academy, making the young lady squirm in her seat due to embarrassment.

The audience loved Alex's story, with many laughing when he likened their meeting to a swan encountering a frog for the first time.

Even Gus couldn't help but laugh in ridicule and ask Renard if Alex was really his ally.

Renard wasn't paying attention to Alex because he was already used to his president's antics.

In fact, he was even mildly amused when the young man claimed that the swan had developed favorable feelings towards the frog,

Everyone turned to look at the Saintess expectantly.

On the surface, Lady Celestria seemed unaffected. However, the Duke could see her gripping her armrests firmly.

In fact, if she wasn't controlling her strength, she might have already snapped the armrests. She was only holding back because she didn't want to amuse the crowd further.

Who was she?

She was the Saintess of the Sun Temple of Solara.

Although she was thinking of a hundred ways to torture Alex, she made sure that her bloodlust and anger didn't show on her face.

If the spectators saw how the young man's ramblings were beneath her, they were less likely to take his words seriously.

Thinking that he could push the story to the limit, Alex added a cinderella-like scene to the farewell party.

During that party, he and Vaan had been accosted by a greasy noble bent on marrying Vaan. Alex's lips thinned at the memory, but he continued regaling the audience.

“They danced together, but when the clock struck midnight, Renard pulled back and ran away, leaving his shoe behind,” Alex said. “Lady Celestria picked it up and looked at it fondly before deciding to make it her family heirloom.”

Princess Xenia, Lavinia, and Lumi were starting to worry because Alex was getting carried away by his storytelling.

In fact, the repairs were taking longer than usual because the mages were also busy listening to his story!

“The Saintess and her Champion built a family of their own with two sons and a daughter,” Alex said softly. “Against all odds, they managed to create a future for just the two of them and they lived happily ever after.”

Chuck was cringing so hard he wanted to disappear. Even his thick skin failed to protect him from this secondhand embarrassment!

The other spectators simply shook their heads helplessly at Alex’s words, seeing his account as some sort of fanfiction that had nothing to do with reality.

However, they were not aware that the “happily ever after” that Alex told them was actually Lady Celestria’s and Renard’s ending in ELO.

While it may sound silly, it was something that happened or would happen if a player decided to pursue the Saintess of Solara.

A few minutes later, the repairs were finally done. Alex swiftly began whetting the spectators’ appetite.

This was also the battle that everyone was looking forward to the most.

After he had defeated Henry, many now saw Gus as the dark horse who had a good chance of defeating Renard.

Renard had still not fully recovered from his duel against Melissa, but he had no intention of backing down.

As Alex called his name, the young man, one of the main heroes of ELO, stepped out of the arched corridor and into the light, ready to face his arrogant opponent.

Chapter 497: Renard Versus Gus Hopper

Gus Hopper.

He was considered one of the strongest antagonists in the early stages of ELO.

Many players didn't know that he was a Summoner who could bring forth not just two but four monsters at the same time.

And these monsters were usually a Rank higher than him.

Given that Gus was Rank 4, summoning four Rank 5 Alpha Crimson Mantises was no problem.

If a player accidentally encountered him in any part of the story quest, a battle was inevitable.

If the player and their teammates weren't wearing the best equipment they could have gotten their hands on, the chances of winning against Gus were zero.

Even now, this rule held true.

The Summoner wasn't meant to be fought in a one-on-one battle. A fully equipped team was required to defeat him. Even then, the battle would not be easy.

Why?

Because Gus himself had another trump card.

Since he sounded so overpowered, how could Renard win against Gus? After all, the former was a rank higher than him, could summon four Rank 5 Monsters at the same time, and even had one more trump card to ensure his victory.

The answer was really simple, and Renard would demonstrate it in the battle that was about to begin.

“Please welcome Renard Vale!”

The spectators exploded in cheers as the young man made his appearance.

For some reason, more people supported Renard than Gus.

‘I guess his personality has done him no favors,’ Alex noted.

Even Henry’s supporters were cheering for Renard, preferring to see him avenge the Gallant Blade.

Renard briefly glanced at Alex before walking toward the centre of the arena, ready to fight Gus until only one of them remained.

“I’ve waited enough already,” Gus complained. “Let’s start this battle, shall we?”

Renard narrowed his gaze before pointing his finger at Gus, making the latter arch an eyebrow.

“I will never lose to someone like you,” Renard declared.

This earned him a louder cheer from the crowd because who could resist supporting the underdog?

Especially an underdog who—thanks to Alex’s talent of making things up—had a happy ending with Lady Celestria waiting for him!

Compared to the arrogant Summoner getting on everyone's nerves, Renard was the obvious choice!

"Leave the big talk behind with your dreams, punk." Gus sneered. "Don't sprout such nonsense when you are awake. Hey, Mr. Commentator, what are you waiting for? Start the fight already!"

Alex nodded and raised his hand.

"Battle Start!"

Gus immediately pressed his palms together, creating two magic circles in front of him.

"Summon!"

A flash of light emerged from the magic circles before two Rank 5 Alpha Crimson Mantises rose from them.

At the same time, Renard pressed his hand on the ground and shouted.

"Summon!"

A magic circle flashed brightly in front of him, and something small sauntered out of the magical formation.

"... Huh?" Lady Celestria blinked several times and rubbed her eyes, but the creature that Renard had summoned did not change!

The rest of the audience was also in a state of confusion because Renard's summon was a familiar little bun with gangster sunglasses.

“Is this a joke?” Gus frowned. “Have you given up? Is this the best you can do?”

The Summoner scoffed as he looked at Dim Dim, who was adjusting its sunglasses to make sure they wouldn’t fall off during the battle later.

The little bun then slowly reached to its side and took out something from its dimensional storage.

Gus watched with bated breath to see what the bun’s secret weapon was.

It was... a wooden sandal.

As the Summoner doubled over in laughter, Renard turned to Dim Dim.

“Dim Dim, can you really take care of those two insects?” Renard asked.

Dim Dim nodded. “Dim!”

Before the duel, Alex had told Renard there was a way to defeat the mantises quickly so he could focus on targeting Gus.

At first, Renard had thought that his club president was just messing with him.

However, after Alex had reminded him of how their club’s finances hinged on his victory, he had understood that even Alex couldn’t joke during a time like this.

“Kill him and crush that little thing as well!” Gus ordered his two Monsters. “Make it quick!”

As soon as the order was given, the two Crimson Mantises lunged at Renard, ignoring Dim Dim for the time being.

That was a mistake.

With a speed that rivaled a baseball being thrown by the world's best pitcher, Dim Dim bounced into the air and slapped the two Mantises aside.

Like normal-sized insects that had been swatted, the two flew through the air and crashed against the protective barrier.

"W-What?!" Gus' shock was written all over his face.

His earlier smugness and arrogance disappeared completely, replaced by confusion.

But before he could fully comprehend what was happening, he noticed that Renard was only a few meters away from him, about to land a killing blow.

Faced with this threat, Gus once again clapped his hands, creating a magic circle beneath his feet before jumping back.

He wasn't called Gus Hopper for nothing.

His jump resembled that of a grasshopper's. With a single hop, he distanced himself significantly in just a few seconds.

A third Rank 5 Alpha Crimson Mantis appeared, ready to engage Renard.

Before that could happen, a flying sandal smacked the creature's cheek, turning it into particles of light instantly.

The wooden sandal then flew back to Dim Dim's hand after insta-killing its target.

Gus was still in a state of shock, but things were going as planned for his opponents.

After all, this was the very ability they were counting on to win.

— — —

< Grandma Agnes' Sandal >

“More effective than fire, poison, and prayers combined.”

Item Grade: Legendary

— Grants the passive skill, Insect Slayer [EX]

— — —

Gus was indeed an opponent who was nearly impossible to defeat for someone who had just started playing ELO.

However, he had met his nemesis—the Dim Sum God's La Chancla!

Gus scanned the arena and realized that the first two Alpha Crimson Mantises had already been defeated by the little bun. It was even shaking its head while muttering, “Mada Mada Dane.”

Alex had told Dim Dim to eliminate anything Gus summoned and leave the Summoner himself to Renard.

It wouldn't actively attack Gus because this was not its battle. Its role here was to support Renard, allowing him to fight the antagonist that had given Alex many painful memories from his time as a novice player.

'Kukuku! Who's your daddy now?' Alex was laughing internally.

The look on Gus' face after seeing that his summons had been defeated so easily was priceless.

'Too bad, I don't have a camera,' Alex thought. 'I'd snap a picture as a memory.'

While Alex was gloating, Gus was gritting his teeth. Aside from summoning a Crimson Mantis one last time, there was only one other thing that he could do to overturn the battle.

Seeing that Gus was striking a familiar pose, Alex crossed his arms.

Back then, he had wondered if the developers of ELO were making fun of the players by creating a character like Gus.

But he now knew that Gus was real, and as much as it annoyed him and countless other players, this cheat character held an ability that was very popular back on earth.

"Henshin!"

Suddenly, a bright flash of light wrapped Gus' entire body.

When the light receded, the young man was wearing a suit of armor that looked like a red grasshopper with red eyes.

"Gus Hopper Red!" Gus stated, making another fighting pose.

Alex almost facepalmed. This seemed to confirm that the developers had no part in Gus' skill set and antics.

Since ELO was the real world, it meant that Gus might have discovered some kind of legacy, allowing him to use this special ability that would have made the kids back on Earth look at him with sparkling eyes.

Heck, even Dim Dim's eyes were sparkling after seeing Gus transform into someone wearing a superhero costume!

'Thank the Gods, there's no fireworks and no background music.' Alex patted his chest in relief. 'If that really happened, I don't know how I would react.'

Gus pointed at Renard, his voice filled with hate. "You're the first person who managed to corner me like this. I'll reward you by making you suffer!"

As soon as he finished talking, Gus jumped forward at great speed, leaving booms in his wake.

Renard was barely able to raise his arms to defend himself when the boom momentarily deafened everyone.

Gus was now fighting using his full powers. Unless Renard had other trump cards that he could use in battle, his defeat was only a matter of time.

Chapter 498: Enjoying The Misery Of Others

Renard originally thought that after Dim Dim took care of the Crimson Mantises, he would not have a hard time defeating their Summoner.

He was wrong.

Very wrong.

The young man found himself unable to even counter properly. Not only was his opponent incredibly fast, but Gus' punches and kicks also hit like a truck!

Renard was unable to do anything other than focus solely on defense.

Each successful block kept him safe, but it rattled his bones. And each attempt to counter only resulted in him getting hit by Gus Hopper's attacks.

Dim Dim watched from the side while sipping a can of cola with a straw.

This wasn't the little bun's battle, and it had no intention of interfering even if Renard was going to lose.

Every clash pushed Renard to his limits, and every blow made Gus' hits stronger.

It was as if the longer he attacked, the more powerful he became. This was one of the most annoying abilities ever. Alex had hated it the most when dealing with Gus during his transformed state.

Of course, Alex had already told Renard about this.

He had also told him what strategy to use, but there was only a ten percent chance of it succeeding.

Renard must first enter his Limit Break Phase, which would increase his overall strength by a hundred percent.

Lastly, he only had one chance to attack because if he missed, Gus would become more cautious and use a different tactic to defeat him.

"Just die already!" Gus roared in anger as he managed to land a punch on the side of Renard's body, making the latter cough up a mouthful of blood.

Gus was about to follow up his attack when a golden lightning streaked across Renard's body, giving the young man the speed boost he needed to avoid Gus' deadly blow.

'Just a little more,' Renard thought as he took a few steps away from his opponent, who was circling and jumping all over the place like an agitated grasshopper.

This made Gus' attacks truly unpredictable. He had no pattern to speak of.

Renard understood that he couldn't hit his enemy unless Gus took the initiative to close the distance and attack him first.

He was very annoyed at being treated as a punching bag, but there was nothing he could do except endure.

As the minutes passed, the golden lightning that snaked around Renard's body brightened, boosting his overall strength as his Limit Break [EX] finally took effect.

'I can do this!' Renard vowed in his heart as he closed his eyes to focus on the movements of his enemy.

Once he entered his Limit Break Phase, all of his senses were heightened to the limit.

Looking at Gus would not help him, so he could only rely on his sixth sense to time his counterattack.

Golden lightning crackled on Renard's right fist, shining brighter than ever before.

It was clear that this was the young man's last chance to win the battle.

"You really think I'll let you hit me?"

Gus' mocking words spread in the arena.

"Don't be delusional, punk. Do you think you're some kind of Hero in a fairytale? You think you're someone special, huh?"

Renard remained perfectly calm, not reacting to those taunts.

More blows landed on his body, numbing him, but the chance that Alex had told him about finally presented itself.

When Gus was in his battle form, he could also unleash a killing blow.

But this killing blow had one particular quirk, and that was a whistling sound.

This attack—Hopper Kick—broke the sound barrier, creating a high-pitched whistle which would only give his opponent a second or two before they were hit.

Without a second to lose, Renard punched to his right with everything he had, blindly trusting the location of the sound that reached his ears.

Everything happened so fast that it felt like a blur.

The next second, a shock wave consumed the arena, blowing Renard backward as if he were hit by a sledgehammer.

His right arm was bent at a weird angle, clearly broken from the clash between him and his opponent.

But just like him, Gus wasn't faring well either.

While Renard had lost the use of an arm, he had lost a leg.

"Damn you!" Gus cursed as he tried to prop himself up from the ground.

But the pain he was feeling overwhelmed his senses, sending him into a state of shock.

This was the first time he had been hurt so badly after becoming a Rank 4 Summoner. Since he wasn't used to such pain, he struggled to cope with it.

Just as he thought that this pain was the worst thing in the world, he heard someone walking toward him.

Gritting his teeth, he tried to raise his head, only to see Renard dragging himself toward him.

"Does it hurt?" Renard asked as blood spilled from the corner of his lips. "Don't worry, there's more where that came from."

"N-No!" Gus cried in panic. "Get away from me! Get away!"

He desperately created a magical circle once more, summoning the last Rank 5 Alpha Crimson Mantis under his command.

In normal circumstances, this would've been more than enough to defeat a heavily injured Renard.

But the young man wasn't fighting alone.

"Kill him!" Gus commanded.

The Crimson Mantis swung its deadly scythes to end the culprit responsible for its master's misery.

However, from the corner of its compound eye, it saw something white and blurry flying towards its head.

"La Chancla!" Dim Dim shouted as it slapped the living sh*t out of the Crimson Mantis, turning it into particles of light.

Due to his panic, Gus had completely forgotten about Dim Dim, who had personally dealt with the other three summoned monsters.

“Damn you!” Gus roared, but no one was intimidated.

At the same time, Renard’s foot slammed on his head and sent him to the ground with a thud.

A small crater appeared at the point of impact where Gus’ head was firmly planted.

“That’s for your trash talk earlier,” Renard said before raising his foot once more. “This one is for me!”

The young man stomped his foot on the back of Gus’ head, causing the crater to expand.

A weak and pained grunt escaped his lips as he tried to say something before turning into particles of light.

“W-Why?”

That was the word that the young man said before he was forcefully ejected from the arena.

“Finally,” Renard muttered as the strength in his legs left him.

The young man fell to his knees but refused to collapse completely.

It was then that Alex’s voice sliced through the tension and silence.

“Winner: Renard Vale!”

After hearing Alex’s declaration, the young man finally reached his limit and fell face-first on the ground, completely unconscious.

That was how the battle between him and Gus ended.

High above in the VIP balcony, Lady Celestria realized that she was gripping her armrest so hard that it had already cracked.

She wanted nothing more than to rush down to the arena and heal Renard with her powers.

However, she couldn't do that.

Suddenly, she saw something that made her stand up from her seat instinctively.

A young lady had appeared in the arena. She walked calmly but swiftly to Renard and lifted him before carrying him like a princess.

Melissa then glanced at the Saintess and gave her a cheeky grin.

Without saying anything else, she arrogantly raised her head and brought Renard to the medics.

"Oh dear, this looks like trouble," Alex said, smirking. "I hope it lasts."

While he had no idea what kind of chaos Melissa's move would cause the unconscious young man, Alex was more than happy to watch from the side and enjoy the misery of others.

Chapter 499: An Opportunity That Is Too Good To Miss

"It's finally over..."

Alex slumped on the couch of his room, feeling incredibly exhausted.

He had just returned from the gambling house with Lumi after collecting their winnings. As expected, the tournament had been incredibly profitable for Alex.

He had bet on both Renard and Charles. As everyone had assumed the odds of them winning were very low, Alex had multiplied his money several times.

Alex managed to win eight million gold coins even after splitting his money among the members of the Zodiac and asking them to bet under their names for the final round.

Of course, to make them feel a little better, Alex generously gave them a hundred thousand gold each as a reward for helping him.

“You look very sloppy right now.”

Alex glanced at Lumi, who had snuck into his room by passing through the walls. Since her room was right next to the young man, it was convenient for her to see him anytime.

“Can you blame me?” Alex asked. “I worked hard, you know?”

Lumi didn’t refute his words. Alex had indeed worked hard.

The young lady then moved toward the couch. She then used her magic to lift Alex’s body for a while before letting it fall gently back down.

The young man’s head was now resting on Lumi’s lap while her right hand was resting on his chest, patting it lightly.

“So what’s the plan for tomorrow?” Lumi asked. “Are we going to put another bet on either Charles or Renard?”

Alex smiled faintly, enjoying the lap pillow and Lumi’s gentle touch.

They had grown a lot closer after spending time with each other.

It took Lumi time to warm up to people, but once she did, she would not hesitate to show her affection in private. But in public, she would still badmouth Alex and look at him in disdain.

"I won't bet on either of them tomorrow," Alex replied. "Even I'm unsure about who will win if they fight seriously against each other."

Earlier, Alex had asked Charles if he planned to fight Renard seriously or concede the match.

"Everyone will watch the fight tomorrow and I don't want to disappoint their expectations," Charles had said firmly. "Also, I want to see how far I can go."

Since Charles wanted to fight seriously, Alex decided not to bet anymore. Renard might be a Main Hero in ELO, but Charles wasn't someone he could underestimate either.

Also, betting on either of them didn't sit well with him, so he might as well call it quits. In any case, he had already profited a lot from the tournament.

"Oh? So you still have some conscience left," Lumi commented as she patted Alex's head with her left hand. "Good boy."

The young man wanted to roll his eyes, but since he didn't want to risk ending this intimate moment prematurely, he decided to just remain silent.

"By the way, do you think the nobles will do something behind the scenes?" Lumi asked. "Since none of their candidates won the tournament, they might decide to mess with the championship match."

"Well they can certainly do that," Alex answered. "But if they do, it will become a diplomatic issue. I'm sure Duke Percival and the Saintess won't want something like that to happen."

"If the Duke really wants to do something, he will wait until the tournament is over. So, I think the Championship Match tomorrow will be just fine."

Lumi smirked. "I like how optimistic you are. But don't forget that the hearts of humans are very fickle."

The young man quietly agreed.

"Don't worry, I already asked for backup," Alex admitted. "I talked to Sir Lex earlier and asked him if he could convince the Headmaster to come here tomorrow for the Championship Match."

"As long as he's present, people will have to think thrice before messing with the students of Frieden Academy."

Lumi found this piece of news quite reassuring, so she no longer dwelled on this topic.

"After the tournament ends, we will only have four more days to explore Solara," Lumi said. "Are you still going to the Whispering Valley?"

"I have to go," Alex replied. "This is too good of an opportunity to miss."

"I'm coming with you."

"I know."

He and Latifa had already talked about his expedition to the Whispering Valley. It was a big reason why she had sent Lumi to accompany Alex on his trip to Solara in the first place.

With her around, Latifa wouldn't have to worry too much about Alex's safety. She could see him anytime she wanted through her Alter's senses.

Also if there was an emergency that Lumi couldn't deal with, Latifa could temporarily possess her body and handle the situation herself.

Latifa possessed the Verdant Throne. Only she could synchronize with Alex, allowing both of them to unleash its full power.

Although the young man still wouldn't be able to defeat those who were Rank 6 and above, he was confident about escaping as long as he wasn't fighting a Rank 8 Powerhouse.

Lex and Nero were examples of these High-Rankers whom Alex simply couldn't defeat with his current power.

"Who are you more worried about?" Lumi asked. "Charles or Renard?"

"Renard," Alex answered in a heartbeat. "Truth be told, I'm more worried about Nessia than the nobles of Solara.

"Have you seen Nessia's eyes earlier? She looked like she had no intention of letting Renard wake up tomorrow. Knowing her, she might actually consider using a powerful laxative that will make Renard miserable for days."

"... For some reason, I can see that happening." Lumi shook her head helplessly. "Nessia can be scary when she gets serious."

"I know, right?" Alex smirked. "But Charles made sure to properly talk with her. Maybe that will stop her from drugging Renard in his sleep."

"What are the chances that she will listen to him?" Lumi arched an eyebrow.

"Around thirty percent," Alex replied. "If he keeps her company, it will rise by another ten percent."

Lumi didn't know if she should laugh, finding Renard quite pitiful right now.

If not for the fact that Alex had asked his Guardian Knight to watch over the unconscious young man, Nessia would have already worked her magic and rendered him unfit for combat.

Chapter 500: I Knew That You Are Someone Extraordinary

When Renard opened his eyes, he found himself in a familiar room.

This was the room assigned to him as one of the delegates from Frieden Academy.

The young man tried to stand up but found his body incredibly heavy.

He wasn't in pain, but he felt exhausted and could barely prop himself up into a sitting position.

"I'm hungry..." Renard muttered.

A moment later, his stomach groaned in agreement.

Suddenly, he heard a crisp crack that prompted him to look at the table in his room.

There, Dim Dim was eating a potato chip while playing with an artifact that Renard was seeing for the first time.

The little bun was even chuckling evilly, as if it was about to defeat an entire army by using its characters from a Gacha Game.

"Kukuku." Dim Dim chuckled. "Go, Barbatos!"

The little bun was playing the game SD Gundam Eternal. It was even using the Limited Character, Barbatos, as its main unit.

The sound of fighting echoed faintly inside the room as the little bun continued to eat its chips and drink its cola leisurely.

Renard had gotten the opportunity to eat some of those potato chips during one of the club's afternoon snack sessions.

In order to catch the little bun's attention, Renard coughed loudly.

Dim Dim turned to look in his direction and blinked once then twice before taking a bite out of its potato chip.

Then it took another sip of its cola.

"Dim Dim, I'm hungry," Renard said in a less intimidating voice as he tried to appeal to the little bun's sense of generosity. "Can I have some food?"

Since Dim Dim had helped him defeat Gus, he had learned to appreciate the little bun more.

He could now understand why Alex often depended on the little guy. Dim Dim was truly a very capable, dependable ally.

"Dim Dim!" Dim Dim jumped toward the bed in a single leap, landing perfectly on top of it.

Without even waiting for Renard to say anything, Dim Dim summoned an overbed table, where it placed a few bamboo steamers. It even added a liter of cola as a bonus.

Renard thanked Dim Dim and opened one of the bamboo steamers.

Seeing that it was filled with pork dumplings, the young man couldn't help but smile.

Among the food Dim Dim could create, this was undoubtedly one of his favorites.

If it shared the recipe with others, they might be able to create something similar in terms of taste, but they would never be able to replicate the pork dumplings perfectly.

Dim Dim's dim sum was very special because it's the tastiest dim sum in the world.

Renard ate with gusto, which made the little bun very happy. Watching people enjoy its food was something that never failed to put a smile on its face.

After thirty minutes of eating his dim sum buffet, the young man was finally full.

He then drank the bottle of cola that Dim Dim gave him and burped afterward.

"Thank you, Dim Dim," Renard said. "That was delicious."

Dim Dim smiled. "Dim~"

Renard then glanced at the clock hanging on the wall and realized that it was already eleven in the evening.

"Looks like I slept for a long time," Renard muttered.

He also felt the heaviness slowly fade away thanks to the dim sum he had eaten earlier.

And since he had just woken up, he didn't feel too sleepy either.

He was very tempted to leave his room and take a stroll to pass the time.

However, Dim Dim advised him to stay in his room because there might be people with evil intentions loitering outside of their hotel.

This reminder was all it took to change Renard's mind. Mr. I-Have-Trust-Issues instantly agreed that it was indeed too dangerous to go outside, so he just walked to the window to look at the night view of the city.

Among the countless buildings, the castle alone stood out. In the darkness, its golden rays shone beautifully. Its beauty now rivalled its glory in the day, making it the most popular attraction in the city.

After admiring it for a few minutes, Renard noticed something in the distance.

Whatever it was, it was flying over the rooftops.

It was also headed in his direction.

A few minutes later, someone wearing white robes and a veil that hid half of her face hovered a good distance away from Renard's window.

Although her whole face except her eyes were hidden, Renard was fully aware of her true identity.

"Are you feeling better?"

A voice spoke inside of his head.

He didn't look surprised after hearing Lady Celestria's voice as this wasn't the first time that the two of them had talked through telepathy.

Since her every movement was being watched by others, this was the only way she could communicate with someone without needing to worry about the opinion of others.

"I'm fine," Renard replied inside his head. "Why are you out this late? Shouldn't you be sleeping?"

"I'm worried about you," Lady Celestria replied. "You've been knocked unconscious twice in a single day and that's not really a good thing."

Renard had to agree that his two battles had taken a toll on his body.

As the young man looked at the lady in the distance, he noticed the necklace that he had given her before their parting.

This discovery made his eyes soften a bit because it meant that the Saintess was taking good care of his gift, which he had bought with his savings.

It might not be the most expensive piece of jewelry, but it was something Renard had bought with his own hard-earned money. And frankly, it had almost cost him everything.

As a commoner, he relied on his monthly stipend from the academy.

Taking from those funds always made him wince, especially when it's for something expensive.

"As you can see, I am fine now," Renard stated. "Please go back and rest. If your guards realize that you have disappeared from under their noses, they might suffer panic attacks."

"You're right." Lady Celestria giggled. "A lady like me shouldn't be wandering the city at such an hour"

The Saintess paused for a bit before pressing her hands together, as if in prayer.

"Be safe. I wish you luck in your battle tomorrow." Lady Celestria smiled beneath her veil. "Don't collapse again, okay? I'd hate to see you being carried by a woman when you are the most vulnerable."

"Ha?" Renard blinked. "What do you mean?"

“Ask your friends.” Lady Celestria turned around. “I’m sure that they will be more than happy to tell you.”

After saying those words, she left without looking back.

The young man could only watch her go, still confused.

“Was I carried by a woman when I was knocked unconscious? Was it a medic?” Renard asked Dim Dim, who had hopped onto the window sill.

Dim Dim nodded. “Dim!”

“Melissa? She was the one that carried me?”

“Dim!”

Renard scratched his head, wondering why the lady that he had defeated had done such a thing.

“Do you know why she did that?” Renard asked. “Shouldn’t she hate me or be angry after losing to me? Was this some sort of twisted revenge?”

The little bun didn’t answer. Instead, Dim Dim smirked mischievously, acting all mysterious. The young man sighed helplessly, knowing he could not get Dim Dim to explain.

‘I should probably get more sleep,’ Renard thought, remembering his upcoming duel with Charles.

Frankly, he didn’t want to fight his club member, but he couldn’t back out now.

He had a feeling that his match tomorrow might be harder than his fight against Gus Hopper.

'Charles...' Renard narrowed his eyes. 'I knew you're someone extraordinary.'

As someone who kept training to grow stronger, he had developed a kind of sixth sense that allowed him to detect people with the same mindset.

Charles was one of those people. Renard understood that the young man from Briarwood Village disliked being placed under the spotlight and would never fight for fame and recognition.

He fought simply to get stronger and protect his loved ones.