

Endless 551

Chapter 551: A Fun That Ended Prematurely

The members of the Endless Horizon Club were at a great disadvantage... well, they were supposed to be.

After all, the lineup of the incoming enemies was no joke. Six Ogres, one of which was a Rank 5 Alpha Monster and the rest Rank 4. Then, Orcs. They might be weaker than the former, only Rank 3 and Rank 4, but they numbered in the dozens.

Among Alex's group, only Eleanora was Rank 4, while the rest were Rank 3. Not to mention, monsters tend to be stronger than humans. Following normal logic, their team should've been on the losing side, struggling to escape, let alone fight back.

Yet that was not the case at all.

A portion of this could be credited to Dim Dim, who nearly emptied its supply of brittle vials, alchemy bombs, and other consumables. What disadvantage? They even had the upper hand.

Even now, the little bun actively helped in the battle, hammering the yellow butts of the Baboons so hard that they shrieked in pain.

While Nessia, Evangeline, and Eleanora unleashed spells from a distance, the rest were knee deep in close combat.

Alex stood at the vanguard, using his taunt at the right moment to force the enemies to focus their attention on him.

Since Charles' passive skill, Challenger's Mark, also forced monsters to target him, Renard, Lavinia, and Lumi used this opportunity to attack them before they could land a hit on Charles.

Truth be told, this might be their first time getting enlightened about what it was like to fight as a team. Assured that others had their backs, they'd executed maneuvers that wouldn't have been possible if they had been battling solo.

Charles had also summoned Rank 2 Obsidian Ant Warriors, whose carapace were very sturdy.

Not only were they tough as a shield, their bites were also nothing to scoff at.

But even with these advantages, they were still far weaker than the enemy. So how were they holding up, even gaining the advantage? Simple. They didn't have to do anything but let their enemies fight among themselves.

The Ogres had been swatting the Orcs near them, thinking of the latter as their enemies.

Dim Dim ought to take the credit for this. Their vision was impaired by the brittle vials thrown at them earlier and had no way to tell apart friend from foe, so they simply swung at anything within their strike range.

The Orcs thought that the Ogres betrayed them, so they counterattacked and actively lunged at the giants, hacking their bodies without fear.

This chaotic free-for-all lasted for several minutes, buying enough time for Alex and the rest of the teenagers to deal with all the immediate threats.

But battle was far from over. Even if the Ogres were injured all over, they were still a powerful foe that mustn't be underestimated.

Fortunately, all the Orcs had been dealt with, as well as the Baboons that had been annihilated first during the chaotic battle.

"What's the plan, Alex?" Lavinia asked.

The young man didn't reply right away. Instead, he gazed at his club members, thinking of the right team combination to deal with their foes.

“Renard, Charles, and Lumi, you deal with the leader of the Ogres,” Alex said after careful consideration. “Lavinia, focus on the Ogre on the far left. Use your speed to distract it. Feel free to attack, but be very careful so you don’t get hit.”

The four teenagers nodded in understanding.

“Dim Dim!” Dim Dim asked if Alex had orders for it, which made the young man smirk.

“You and the other farm animals deal with the Ogre on the far right,” Alex ordered. “Evangeline, Nessia, and Eleanora, focus your attention on the Ogre on the Alpha Monster’s right side. I’ll deal with the two remaining Ogres.”

After receiving their roles, everyone moved as one.

Lumi, Evangeline, and Lavinia initially worried about Alex since he had to deal with two Ogres.

But knowing that the young man wouldn’t shoulder things that he couldn’t handle, they decided to trust him.

The moment Charles came within the Ogres’ strike range, they all shifted their attention to him.

But Alex used his taunt to target two of the Ogres, making them charge in his direction.

Daisy simultaneously charged at one of the Ogres about to swat Charles with its wooden club. She perfectly hit the side of the monster’s body, pushing it aside.

The other farm beasts took this opportunity to gang up on the monster, while Dim Dim lunged at the Ogre and threw two brittle vials at its eyes at point blank range.

A cry of pain erupted in the forest as the Ogre suffered from momentary blindness.

It swung its wooden club randomly, hoping to hit anything within its range.

But, Daisy fearlessly rammed the wooden club with her horns, breaking it apart.

The farm beasts took this opportunity to beat the crap out of the incapacitated Ogre, one-sidedly dealing damage to it.

Alex kept on taunting the two Ogres and pulled them away from the rest of his allies.

The Crimson-Furred Monkeys decided to help Alex and unleashed a barrage of Stone Bullets.

Although it was only a low-ranking spell, and the Ogres' physical bodies were extremely tough to the point of suffering negligible damage, it didn't fail to annoy them.

Alex glanced at the leader of the Monkeys and seemed to have formed an unspoken agreement with them.

Their goal was simple.

Distract the Ogres and take them somewhere where they couldn't help their allies.

The young lady with the black-snake tattoo on her face clicked her tongue in annoyance, for she could no longer control any other monsters to overwhelm the youngsters.

'If only...' the young lady clenched her fist in frustration, certain that the Sovereign of the Forest's eyes were still upon her. If she meddled again, her actions wouldn't be tolerated.

Half an hour later, the leader of the Ogres collapsed on the ground, resulting in a brief quake.

Renard, Charles, and Lumi were panting for breath. The Alpha Monster had been incredibly exhausting to fight.

If not for the monster's injury and momentary blindness from Dim Dim's vial barrage, they probably wouldn't have won with just the three of them. It would've taken all the members of Endless Horizon to deal with just one of it.

Lavinia, and Alex, whose roles were to lure three of the six Ogres away, were still busy playing their role.

Fortunately, Dim Dim and its friends had already dealt with another Ogre, while Eleanora, Evangeline, and Nessia had also finished dealing with their opponent.

Once their battles ended, they hurried to where Alex and Lavinia were fighting and helped them deal with their foes.

The battle against the Ogres soon ended, making the perpetrator watching them from afar stomp her foot in frustration as her fun ended prematurely.

Chapter 552: My Hearing Is Not As Good As It Used To Be

< Level Up! >

Alex sighed in relief the moment the last of the Ogres fell in battle.

It had been a while since they had fought as a team. Judging by how the battle ended, their teamwork had not turned rusty.

Everyone, including Charles and Renard, had reached a level where they could win against these powerful monsters if they fought together.

But truth be told, Charles surprised Alex the most.

If their group were a deck of cards, Charles would be the Joker.

His tale should have ended in the Dungeon of Beginnings, but he managed to survive that turning point in his life.

Alex had played ELO for years, so he had an idea about most characters' future. But not Charles. It was simply beyond his understanding.

For all the Main Heroes and Main Heroines, regardless of the path they chose, Alex would be able to plan ahead to complement their actions.

But Charles' future was a blank slate—a mystery that no one... not even the Deities of the world of Arcana could predict.

'The Void-Touched must be behind this,' Alex thought.

Originally, he didn't know why Charles wished to go to the Mistral Weave Forest.

But he could vaguely infer what might've happened after he noticed that the monsters no longer seemed to be in their normal state of mind.

While there were many characters in the game who had the power to tame and even control monsters, Alex believed that the person responsible for this was one of the members of the mysterious organization led by Morax.

'It should be Diona,' Alex concluded as he rubbed his chin. 'She's the only one who can control hundreds of monsters below her rank with ease.'

The young man could even guess why she hadn't sent more reinforcements after seeing them defeat the first wave of monsters.

'She might have been able to do whatever she wanted if we weren't in the Mistral Weave Forest.' Alex casually opened his map to check his surroundings and confirm his theory.

A big green dot the size of his thumb was blinking on the map, showing the location of the Beast Sovereign that ruled the Mistral Weave Forest.

Another smaller blinking yellow dot could be seen at least a kilometer away from their location, making Alex smirk.

'So there you are.' Alex narrowed his eyes.

And just as he expected, the name Diona was also attached to that yellow blinking dot.

Usually, Alex didn't open his map, not wanting to be overly dependent on it to detect enemies.

Still, he wasn't that stubborn, especially when he understood that they were facing an opponent that was stronger than them.

'Right now, Diona should be a Rank 7 Beast Master.' Alex glanced in the direction where he believed the young lady with the black snake tattoo was.

Suddenly, Alex remembered something very important.

'Oh... sh*t! I completely forgot!'

Just as the young man was about to warn the others and tell them to retreat, the yellow blinding dot on his map moved towards them at a very fast rate.

Before he could even reach Lumi's side, a young lady landed at the center of their battle formation.

"Hah... I'm so annoyed right now."

Everyone's gazes landed on the tall young lady clad in rugged leathers layered with charms made of fang, claw, and bone.

She looked like an Amazon Warrior. Her messy ash-brown hair was tied loosely to keep out of her face.

Even then, it was more bird nest than hair.

Her emerald-green eyes gleamed with mischief and predatory intelligence.

She emanated the presence of a wild beast that could pounce on them at any moment.

This made the members of the Endless Horizon Club raise their guard subconsciously.

“You must be Charles Lambert,” Diona said as she moved close to the young man, eyeing him curiously. “Well, you’re at least above average, I guess.”

She then playfully placed a finger under his chin, raising it a bit so that he would be forced to look at her in the eyes.

Charles tried to resist, but for some reason, he found himself frozen in place. He couldn’t move his body no matter what he did.

He was like a rat staring at the face of a snake that could end his life in a heartbeat.

To everyone’s surprise, Diona lowered her head to kiss the young man’s lips... or at least, tried to do that.

But the thing that she kissed wasn’t Charles’ lips but the back of Nessia’s hand.

“Don’t even think of kissing my boyfriend so casually,” Nessia said firmly.

Hearing his lover’s words, Charles finally broke free from his paralysis. He then pulled Nessia behind his back and glared at the stranger who had tried to take advantage of him.

“Oh?” Diona arched an eyebrow. “So you have a girlfriend, huh? Not bad. At least you have a bit of backbone... both of you.”

The Beast Master turned her attention to Nessia, observing her closely.

“Who are you?” Charles demanded. “Are you the one calling out to me?”

Diona smirked. “I don’t usually introduce myself to people, but since you and I share the same destiny, I guess telling my name is the least bit of courtesy that I can give you.”

Still wearing a mischievous smile on her face, Diona placed her hand over her chest and gave Charles a playful bow of greeting.

“My name is Diona. And... I find you, Charles Lambert, very interesting. Right now, you’re still too weak to become my Mate. But I believe after a year or two, you will undergo explosive growth that will leave your peers in the dust.

“That is the fate of the Void-Touched. Beings who break the laws of the world. But you can only do that once you overcome your weakness. Still, looking at you now, it seems that you already know what kind of power you possess, am I right?”

Charles didn’t answer Diona’s question, which made the latter shrug.

“It doesn’t matter. You can’t run away from your destiny.” Diona crossed her arms over her chest. “Sooner or later, you will belong to me...”

“I will never...” Charles wasn’t able to finish whatever he was going to say because a finger pressed over his lips, stopping him midway.

“Hush.” Diona smirked. “Never say never. You are far too weak to negotiate anything with me. Or... do you want me to break that girl behind you before you understand how powerless you are?”

Diona was confident that even if all the teenagers were to attack her at the same time, she would be able to easily subdue them without too much trouble.

Unfortunately, she was at the wrong place at the wrong time.

"Diona, stop messing around."

The Beast Master frowned before shifting her gaze towards the one who spoke to her.

"Excuse me. Are you talking to me?" Diona eyed Alex as if she was about to snap his head.

"Who else am I talking to?" Alex replied fearlessly. "Are you deaf?"

"Hahaha! It seems that you have some very funny friends, Charles." Diona clenched her fists, creating cracking sounds. "You see, when I see someone trying to be funny, I have the strong urge to break them until they realize that they have messed with the wrong person."

"Yes, you have messed with the wrong person," Alex retorted. "Isn't that right, Sir Lex?"

As if waiting for that moment, an old man stepped out from behind a tree while chewing on some beef jerky.

The old knight was still wearing gangster sunglasses, prompting the little bun to also put on its matching glasses.

The moment Diona saw the old man, her instincts screamed at her that this was an opponent that she couldn't defeat no matter what.

"What did you say earlier, young lady?" Lex asked good-naturedly after he finished eating his beef jerky. "My hearing is not as good as it used to be."

Seeing the old knight appear, Lumi sighed in relief. Among the students, she was the only one who truly knew how strong Lex was.

“Who are you?” Diona asked warily.

Her instincts were telling her to flee, but she fought this strong urge to run with sheer willpower and stupidity.

“I’m just your friendly neighborhood old man,” Lex replied. “Now, please answer my question. Who do you plan to break until they realize that they have messed with the wrong person?”

Originally, Lex hadn’t intended to interfere. He had simply stood aside and watched the teenagers fight against the monsters.

But when Alex had opened his map, he had also seen the old man hiding a short distance behind them.

If not for that, the young man wouldn’t have had the slightest idea that his guardian had followed him the moment he had entered the forest.

This was why he decided to put a stop to Diona’s bullying. The young lady could talk as big as she wanted, but Lex would not sit still and let her break all of Alex’s bones under his watch.

Chapter 553: We Will Let Bygones Be Bygones

Diona subconsciously took a step back the moment she realized that the old man before her could squash her like a bug if he willed.

But that didn’t mean her rank was something to scoff at.

At only twenty-three years old, she had reached Rank 7 Beastmaster. In her generation, most people were still stuck at Rank 5 or Rank 6 of their respective professions, so her pace could already be considered fast.

But how could she compare to Lex, a Rank 8 Prism Knight?

Half a step more, and he'd be a Rank 9 Powerhouse. At that level, only Paragons would be above him.

For most people, Rank 9 was the final destination of their journey, but Lex's potential surpassed that. Despite his current rank, he was one of the three beings who stood a chance in winning a battle against a Paragon. Not to mention, he had already proven that.

"S-Shameless!" Diona forced herself to hold her ground against the old man's intimidating pressure. "You're already this old, and you're trying to interfere in the quarrel of young people?! Don't you feel embarrassed?! This is bullying, you know?!"

Alex's Guardian chuckled after hearing the young lady's "shameless" rhetoric.

Earlier, she was the one who was bullying the teenagers despite her significantly higher rank and significantly higher age.

But now that someone stronger than her had come, she was crying foul and playing the victim.

"Kukuku!" Dim Dim chuckled as soon as it landed on top of Lex's head, fixing its gangster glasses like a villain.

"You're right, I am a very shameless old man," Lex said as he continued to walk towards Diona. "So what if I feel like bullying you? What can you do about it?"

"Y-You!" Diona clenched her fists in anger, but she didn't dare make a move to attack or annoy a person that could slap her to oblivion.

"What should we do with this lady, Dim Dim?" Lex asked the little bun that was currently perched on top of his head.

"Dim Dim!"

“Oh! I like the sound of that. She did get in the way of your trip to pick up some fruits, no?”

“Dim!”

The little bun huffed and shook its little stubby hand as if truly angered about its fruit-picking adventure with its friends being disturbed by Diona’s bullying.

Daisy, Captain, and the other Farm Beasts also glared at the annoying lady who got in the way of their leisurely trip to the Mistral Weave Forest.

“You said your name is Diona, right?” Lex said calmly. “Alright, you have two choices. The first one is, you fill these baskets with fruit. Second, I drag you back to the academy so you can have a heart-to-heart talk with the Paragon of Space, Rowan Vademont. Now, choose.”

“Hmph!” Dim Dim fixed its gangster sunglasses, still angry at Diona’s interference.

But since no one was seriously hurt among their group, Dim Dim decided to be magnanimous and decided to give her an olive branch to settle the conflict.

“You... want me to fill these baskets with fruit?” Diona asked. “Is that all?”

“Yes.” Lex nodded. “As long as you do that, we will let bygones be bygones.”

Although he wasn’t afraid to face off against the members of the Void-Touched, he was a little worried that they would set their eyes on Alex and harm him in ways that he might not be able to predict.

To settle things once and for all, he decided to choose this path. That way, everyone could take a step back.

Diona readily accepted the offer of filling the baskets with fruit, thinking she could use that opportunity to escape.

And that was what she did.

She tried to escape!

Unfortunately, she had greatly underestimated the ability of a Prism Knight who had a taunt ability that had a two-mile range.

Yes, a two-mile taunt skill was seriously broken and shouldn't exist.

But Lex was able to achieve this feat after he became an Oathbreaker.

Infuriated at Diona for breaking her word, the little bun did what it had to do as soon as Diona got pulled back.

It smacked Diona's head with its toy hammer until she was knocked unconscious.

But it didn't end there.

The little bun jumped on the young lady's forehead and poked her nose repeatedly. Its tapping speed was so fast that the little bun's hand had turned into a blur.

All everyone could see was Diona's nose moving from time to time until it turned red from the little bun's repeated poking.

Dim Dim had no plans of stopping. Eventually, Alex felt pity for Diona, so he picked up the little bun and patted its head to calm it down.

"I'm not saying you should forgive her, Dim Dim," Alex said with a smile. "You can poke her again later after we drag her back to the academy, okay?"

Dim Dim nodded firmly. "Dim!"

Alex knew how annoying Diona was in the game. Once she had developed a grudge on someone, she would repeatedly attack them at any given opportunity.

Since that was the case, he decided to take the initiative to teach the girl a lesson first and make her understand that she shouldn't underestimate them just because they were weaker than her.

But he needed the Headmaster's help to pull off his planned trick.

As long as Professor Rowan got involved in the matter, Diona wouldn't be able to weasel her way out of it so easily.

After all...

No matter where she ran...

No matter where she hid...

The moment Professor Rowan left a tracker mark on her body, she would not be able to escape him even if she ran to the edge of the world.

With the matter dealt with, Dim Dim and its friends returned to their fruit-picking expedition.

The Crimson-Furred Monkeys decided to lend it a hand because Dim Dim was also their friend.

As for the members of Endless Horizon, they carried the tied up, unconscious Diona back to the academy.

Charles still had many questions for her, and he hoped that after the young lady woke up, she could give him the answers he was looking for.

Chapter 554: Carrying A Ticking Time Bomb

Professor Rowan didn't know if he should laugh or cry the moment Alex and his friends entered his office.

At first, he had been a bit surprised when one of the most troublesome students of his academy had asked for permission to discuss something important.

Naturally, he had agreed to have an audience with him.

However, he didn't expect that Alex would saunter into his office while carrying Diona, who was tied on a pole like a pig that was about to be roasted whole.

The Paragon of Space was a very knowledgeable person, so he instantly recognized the young lady that seemed to have suffered under the hands of Alex and his group.

"Can you please tell me what happened?" Professor Rowan asked the old knight, who also entered the room alongside the teenagers.

He wanted an unbiased account of the events that happened so he could better understand the situation.

Lex explained the whole story without sugarcoating anything.

He understood the "political" implications of handling a member of the Void-Touched because they were a very tight-knit group.

They were also the type to rush into war in order to avenge one of their own.

This was why even the Demon Worshipers didn't want to mess with these crazy individuals. Messing with one of them was like poking a hornet's nest.

A long and deep sigh escaped Professor Rowan's lips after Lex finished his explanation.

"It seems that you have a lot of explaining to do, Miss Diona," Professor Rowan said calmly. "What are you doing in my territory and stirring up trouble, hoping to hurt my students?"

"I came here for one thing and one thing only," Diona replied while still tied up on the pole that Alex was holding. "I wanted to see the face of our newest members and test his abilities."

Professor Rowan already had a theory on why Diona had come to the Mistral Weave Forest. Hearing her reply confirmed his suspicion.

"Well then, Alex, how do you plan to handle this situation?" Professor Rowan continued. "You do know that you're carrying a ticking time bomb, right?"

"I do, but I don't care," Alex replied with confidence. "If she messes with me, I'll mess with her too. Let's see who surrenders first."

Diona wanted to curse the shameless young man for his arrogance. But she didn't dare to do it.

The little bun that was perched on top of Alex's head was still holding its little toy hammer and was smiling sweetly at Diona.

Although that smile looked very sweet and innocent, the young lady understood that the little bun was no angel.

In fact, it wouldn't be an exaggeration to call it a devil.

All it would take was a single mistake, and Dim Dim would smack her with its toy hammer before poking her nose to oblivion.

"Okay, let's all calm down first," Professor Rowan said. "I'm sure that Charles has a lot of questions for Miss Diona. Why don't you let them talk for a bit? After that, we can think of what to do with her next."

Alex nodded. "We'll do it your way, Professor."

The young man carefully placed down the tied-up Diona on the floor, making the latter sigh in relief.

He also understood that letting a member of the Void-Touched explain how their powers worked would benefit Charles and allow him to better understand the organization he would belong to.

There was no escaping this fate. Frankly, Alex believed that Charles would be safer the moment he officially joined their ranks.

"I'll let the two of them talk in private first." Professor Rowan snapped his fingers and both Charles and Diona disappeared from his office. "Don't worry, she won't be able to hurt him inside my domain."

Nessia still looked a little worried, but after hearing the Headmaster's assurance, her anxiety lessened a bit.

"Let's go back to the clubroom," Alex proposed. "Thank you, Professor, for hearing us out."

"You're welcome, but I do hope that you will no longer look for trouble, Mr. Stratos," Professor Rowan replied. "Keep a low profile for now and study hard."

"Yes, Professor." Alex bowed respectfully. "I will do as you say."

The old knight snorted before muttering something under his breath.

"I doubt it," Lex said in a volume that only Lumi, Lavinia, and Evangeline were able to pick up due to their heightened senses.

He wasn't being pessimistic.

Lex simply believed that Alex was fated to always face challenges most people couldn't even think of. This was what destiny laid out for him.

There was also the issue of him being part of the Aetherion Royal Family, which meant that he could inherit the throne as his birthright.

While Lex would support the young man if Alex wished to become a crown prince candidate, he had a feeling that his Prince had no intention of being an Emperor.

'Well, whatever comes will come.' Lex crossed his arms over his chest while leaning on the wall of the office. 'Frankly, I hope that the empire will continue to stay oblivious of his existence.'

The old knight didn't want to open a can filled with worms, so he decided to just go with the flow, at least for now.

After leaving the Headmaster's Office, Dim Dim told Alex that it would go to Fran's farm to check if she had finished baking the fruits they had picked up into fruit pies.

Also, the little bun warned Alex of Fran's twin brother, Finn.

It seemed that the dwarf would often mutter Alex's name while chopping up wood, which wasn't a good sign.

Alex sighed internally because he understood how much Finn cared for his sister.

In fact, if Finn refused to give his blessing to Alex and his sister, there would be no happy ending to Fran's route.

With the little bun away and the other members of the Endless Horizon Club returning to the dormitory, Alex found himself seated beside Latifa, Lavinia, and Evangeline at the round table.

Lotte and Lumi were serving them with tea and snacks, allowing the four to talk about random topics, creating a lively atmosphere.

“So, when do you plan to introduce Fran as an honorary member of our club?” Latifa asked after sipping her tea. “Have you talked to her about it?”

“I have.” Alex nodded. “She said that she would think about it first. I told her that there was no rush for her to give me an answer. I even said that she can give me her reply after our visit in the Shadow Forest.”

Latifa nodded. “Alright.”

The young lady shared the memories of all of her Alters, so she knew just how important the Shadow Forest was for Alex and Fran.

Alex then glanced at Lavinia before reaching out to hold her hand. “Have you sent a letter to your grandfather that we will be visiting him this weekend?”

“I have,” Lavinia replied as she gave Alex’s hand a light squeeze. “He already sent his reply. He says that he is looking forward to our visit. I just hope that he won’t throw a party, dragging the entire village to welcome the two of us.”

Alex suddenly felt anxious because the possibility of that happening was quite high.

He planned to tell Lavinia’s family about their relationship and hoped to get their blessing.

However, he was also prepared for a tongue-lashing once he explained that there were a few other ladies whom he also wished to marry in the future.

Chapter 555: Those Who Challenge Fate Itself [Part 1]

“The moment I get out of here, I’ll use the face of that silver-haired kid to wipe the floor,” Diona grumbled while massaging her wrists after she had been freed.

“How dare he tie me up like a pig for roasting? I’ll murder him!”

Charles didn’t say anything and simply observed the young lady that was cursing Alex with every fiber of her being.

Clearly, she found the experience humiliating. Still, it was her fault for instigating everything in the first place, so Charles believed that she deserved it.

“Well then, I’m sure you have a lot of questions,” Diona suddenly said with a fearless grin. “If it’s about my three sizes, it’s...”

“Stop!” Charles raised his hand. “I’m not interested in your three sizes. I already have a girlfriend whom I love very much.”

“Oh really?” Diona giggled. “But you see, I can tell that you and her still hadn’t done the deed. Both of you still smell like milk to me. So, how about I teach you a thing or two, hmm?”

“If you’re just going to talk nonsense, I’m leaving.”

“Hah... you sweet summer child.”

Right now, the two of them were inside Professor Rowan’s personal domain.

Diona wouldn’t be able to leave it unless the Headmaster gave her permission to leave. She also couldn’t kill or use Charles even if she tried.

Perhaps she understood her current predicament, so she decided to vent out her frustration at Charles by teasing him a bit.

“Tell me what the Void-Touched are,” Charles said calmly. “And also, tell me about this organization that you belong to.”

Diona sighed before scratching her already messy hair. Morax had asked her to meet Charles and explain to him everything about their organization.

Since that was the case, there was really no problem in telling him everything.

However, she was still so upset over what had happened in the Mistral Weave Forest.

Out of spite, she was contemplating if she should just play hard to get or stay silent.

Just as she was thinking on what to do, Charles sat cross-legged on the ground and closed his eyes.

He had been prepared to spend some time with Diona in order to better understand his current situation. That didn't mean he enjoyed her presence one bit.

"If you want to play the waiting game, then so be it," Charles stated with his eyes still closed. "We can stay here for as long as you want. I don't particularly mind."

"Hoh?" Diona arched an eyebrow. "It seems that our newest cub has a bit of backbone huh? Fine. I'll tell you everything so I can leave this place soon."

Being confined to a place similar to a prison didn't sit well with her.

She liked her freedom the most after all.

"The Void-Touched are individuals who defy the rules of this world," Diona explained. "I don't know what kind of power you possess, but in general, this world will do its best to kill us. For example, I am a Beast Master. But when I first awakened this power, any monster within a particular range would try to kill me."

"It's like they could not allow me to exist in this world. Every member of our organization has the passive skill, Challenger's Mark. However, not all Challenger's Mark are the same."

“When I awakened my power, my Challenger’s Mark had a range of two-miles. Any monsters within that range turned berserk and tried to hunt me down. As I became stronger, the range of this passive skill also increased.

“And, it will continue to increase until you finally master your power. Then and only then will you understand why this world is trying so hard to kill us. That is what it means to be Void-Touched.”

Diona also sat cross-legged on the ground and rested the side of her head on her right palm.

“Our leader’s name is Morax. He is the one who has suffered the most among us,” Diona went on. “When his Challenger’s Mark first activated, it didn’t affect monsters. It affected humans.”

Charles’ eyes widened in shock after hearing this piece of information.

Right now, his Challenger’s Mark would only fully activate whenever he was inside dungeons.

While outside of it, the range on which he could affect monsters was only sixty meters at most.

It didn’t seem fair to compare his hardship to Diona as well as the leader of the group, Morax, because it was obvious that they had suffered several times more than he had.

“You should have seen it.” Diona smirked. “Back then, my existence alone could cause Monster Stampedes. There was a time when I was traveling into a city and the local lord there tried to harass me.

“He even ordered his guards to seize me and make me his plaything. Good thing I was a very fast runner, so I managed to escape them. But I am someone who holds grudges. That night, I went to a nearby forest and lured a horde of monsters into that blasted city.

“Hahaha! Nothing was left of them after those monsters razed everything to the ground. That is still one of my fondest memories.”

Charles’ face became pale as he listened to Diona’s bragging.

He could understand her desire for revenge against such disgusting men.

However, what he couldn't accept was her creating a calamity that engulfed an entire city and killed countless innocent civilians.

"I know what you're thinking," Diona stated. "But I assure you that everyone in that city deserved to die. It's a city of bandits, ruled by the Bandit King. Law and order didn't exist in that place. I believe that I even did humanity a favor by wiping those scums from the face of the world."

Charles felt a little better when he heard her explanation, but he wasn't sure if he completely believed her.

He didn't mind if bandits were killed because they were a stain that should be erased from the world if possible.

"But, Charles, there is something that you need to understand," Diona said seriously, all traces of playfulness gone. "This power that is given to us isn't a curse. It's a blessing. The Challenger's Mark is a challenge given to those who challenge fate itself.

"Many of us die before we can even grow to the point that we can control our powers. So, every member of our organization is precious. We are people who defied fate and lived to tell the tale.

"In short, we are the chosen ones, who were supposed to die an early death. But, as you can see, both of us are alive and well. This means that we now control our own destinies. Isn't that exciting?"

Charles listened seriously to every word that Diona had said.

However, there was one thing that he didn't tell her.

He believed that he would have died in the Dungeon of Beginnings if not for the fact that he had met Alex.

No...

It was more accurate to say that Alex had sought him out specifically so that he could accompany him to the Dungeon of Beginnings.

Charles had spoken to Lavinia in secret about Alex's past. The young lady had attested that instead of going straight to the Capital City of Harmonia, Alex had decided to make a detour to Briarwood Village and take the scholarship test there.

Lastly, when Charles had seen Alex, he hadn't been able to shake off the feeling that the young man knew him.

It was a very weird feeling, but Charles believed their meeting hadn't been a coincidence.

If Alex didn't go to Briarwood Village, Charles was certain that he would have died inside the Dungeon of Beginnings.

In short, it was his friend who had helped him break free from Fate, which was why Charles vowed to not allow Diona to harm his benefactor, who made him reunite with his sisters, and even helped him cure Eris' disease.

Chapter 556: Those Who Challenge Fate Itself [Part 2]

"So, you mean to say that the challenges we face become our strength once we overcome them?" Charles asked.

"Exactly," Diona confirmed. "That is the true power of the Void-Touched."

The young lady warily glanced up at the sky because she could sense that the Paragon of Space was listening to their conversation.

Since this secret was something that was only known to the members of their organization, she decided to communicate telepathically with Charles.

"I already told you that I'm a Beast Master," Diona said silently. "But that's not really the truth. Morax warned us to not tell our true professions to other people because it might spark their greed, envy, and jealousy.

"The Headmaster of Frieden Academy might be eavesdropping on our conversation, so only reply to me using your mind. This is a skill that all members of the Void-Touched can use freely. We can talk telepathically with our kind even over long distances."

After giving Charles some time to process this, Diona resumed her explanation.

"My true Profession isn't a Beast Master. I am actually a Beast Conqueror. I can dominate any monsters that are equivalent to my Rank or lower. Right now, I am Rank 7, so I can dominate Monsters that are Rank 7 and below. However, there is still a limit.

"At most, I can control three Rank 7 Monsters, twelve Rank 6, twenty Rank 5, and a hundred Rank 4 Monsters. But it doesn't end there. I can also command over a thousand Rank 3 Monsters and below. What do you think? Not too shabby, right?"

The corner of Charles' lip twitched after hearing the capability of the lady in front of him.

She could practically raise a Monster Army and raze villages and towns if she wanted to. Even smaller cities could easily fall to her.

He had to admit that if Diona really wished to harm them, they would not stand a chance with their current level of strength.

Seeing her junior's surprised expression, the young lady felt very smug because this was the reaction that she was looking for.

"I already told you about my Profession and Abilities," Diona said. "Now, tell me what kind of Challenger's Mark you possess. Don't worry. As your senior, I can give you plenty of advice on how to overcome it."

Charles hesitated at first. This was his first time meeting Diona. He couldn't possibly say that he trusted her right now.

However, it didn't change the fact that she was a Void-Touched and was part of the organization that he would eventually join.

"I... my Challenger's Mark also attracts monsters," Charles replied.

"Oh? So are you some kind of Beast Conqueror then?" Diona grinned. "Wouldn't that make us very compatible?"

"Dungeons..."

"Hmm? What did you just say?"

Charles stared straight at the Beast Conqueror's eyes before saying the secret that only a handful of people knew.

"My Challenger's Mark compels all Dungeon Monsters to try killing me," Charles declared.

The young lady blinked once then twice before she reached out to grab both of Charles' hands.

"You're not messing with me, right?" Diona said solemnly. "Are you serious? Does your Challenger's Mark aggro all Dungeon Monsters?"

"Yes," Charles replied. "I've confirmed it with the help of my friend."

Diona narrowed her gaze when she heard the word "friend".

She had a very bad memory of being backstabbed by so-called friends. Because of this, she didn't trust anyone except the other Void-Touched.

"Charles, listen very carefully."

Her gaze was so serious that it made Charles gulp subconsciously. Before he knew it, he was holding his breath.

"Will you marry me?" Diona asked.

"Huh?!" Charles looked at the madwoman in disbelief. "What are you talking about?!"

The young man hastily shook the young lady's hands off and backed away.

Right now, the playfulness in Diona's words and gaze was all gone.

She was looking at him as if he was some kind of prized prey that she wanted to take back home, lock in a cage, and display in her living room.

Understanding that she had spoken her inner thoughts out loud, Diona decided to take a step back and explain Charles' current situation to him.

"Charles, do you think my Profession as a Beast Conqueror is awesome?" Diona asked.

The young man nodded, still eyeing her cautiously.

Diona smiled faintly before pressing her hands together, as if saying a silent prayer.

"A Beast Conqueror can command over a thousand beasts and rampage across the land, but you, Charles, are a bigger threat than I'll ever be." Diona's voice was filled with excitement. "I already told you that our Challenger's Mark is both a curse and a blessing.

"I was hunted down by monsters in the past. But now, those same monsters obey my will. Tell me, do you understand what your true power is?"

Charles instinctively wanted to disagree with whatever nonsense this crazy lady might say, but a sudden realization dawned upon him.

Two words appeared inside of his head, and it was a Profession that even he believed would be a force to reckon with.

"Dungeon Conqueror," Diona said the words that had appeared inside Charles' mind. "Charles, you will have the power to subjugate dungeons and make them your own.

"This means that you are a one-man army, and once you overcome the challenge of the world, there will be no one who can become your equal!"

The young man shuddered as if an electrical current had shocked his spine.

Everything was now making sense to him.

The reason why the Dungeon Monsters wished to kill him was because they were afraid that he would absorb the Dungeon Cores and make them his servants.

There were many types of Dungeons in the world, ranging from Rank F to Rank S.

Even the strongest Adventurers didn't dare to challenge a Rank S Dungeon unless they were fully prepared and possibly suicidal.

If Charles absorbed the core of a Rank S Dungeon... this meant that he could truly become an absolute powerhouse that could move across the lands unhindered.

'I better get on his good side while he's still weak!' Diona thought. 'Once he matures, our organization will have another absolute powerhouse like Morax.'

Suddenly, Diona remembered the words that Charles had told her a while ago.

"I've confirmed it with the help of my friend."

The young lady clenched her fists because no one else must know about Charles' secret.

If people were to know about it, they would definitely capture him and make his life miserable. Diona didn't even want to imagine how bad it would get.

In order to prevent that kind of future, she decided to eliminate those who knew about Charles' secret, even if that meant that she had to kill one of his friends.

'I'm sorry, but this is for your own good, Charles.' Diona lowered her gaze to look at the ground beside her feet. 'Humans are greedy creatures. Even the people you call as friends can stab you in the back the moment they realize that they can take advantage of you.'

She had suffered so many betrayals in the past that she no longer had any faith in humanity.

'I will not let you suffer the same fate,' Diona vowed as she eyed Charles up and down. 'You may hate me now, but this is for your own good.'

Charles had no idea what the Beast Conqueror was thinking.

For now, he was still reeling from the realization that with his powers he could make the world a peaceful place... or destroy it on a whim.

Chapter 557: Ready For Round Two?

While Charles and Diona were having a private talk, Alex was busy showering Lavinia with affection.

The young lady's head rested on Alex's lap, and the young man lightly stroked her hair, just like how a cat slave spent quality time with his cat.

At some point, Alex wondered if Catkins also purred.

If Lavinia didn't, that was fine.

But if she did... He wanted to see and hear it.

[E/N: furry spotted]

His fingers started brushing through her hair. Upon sensing the young lady had relax her body, he started rubbing the base of her cat ears, making her shudder.

The young man thought Lavinia would get angry and even readied his apology. But instead of scolding him, she covered her lips with her hand as if trying to stop the sound that almost escaped.

Alex understood the significance of Lavinia letting him touch her ears and tail.

It was a sign of trust and love. A Catkin would not allow just anyone to casually touch their ears or tail without permission. Many would react aggressively if someone they didn't know well enough touched them out of the blue.

Seeing that Lavinia did not turn hostile at his touch, he realized that she truly accepted him as her lover.

'How cute,' Alex mused as he continued to gently caress her ear with his right hand while stroking her back with his left.

Latifa, Lumi, and Lotte were all looking at the two lovebirds with serious gazes.

Their attention was focused on Lavinia and her tail, which was swaying languidly.

As Beastkins, they didn't need anyone to explain to them the significance of this gesture.

When they saw Alex reach out to hold Lavinia's tail, all three of them offered a silent prayer for the Catkin, who might pass out at any moment from the overwhelming sensation that she was about to experience.

And just as they expected, the moment Alex's fingers wrapped around Lavinia's tail, her body shuddered uncontrollably.

"A-Alex... stop!" Lavinia seemed to have lost her strength. Even her voice sounded weak and breathy. "My tail is sensitive right now. Please... have mercy... Ughhh!"

Feeling a little mischievous, Alex gently played with Lavinia's tail.

He still couldn't believe that the proud princess of the Clawford Tribe, who had once looked down on him in the past, was now writhing in ecstasy because of his touch.

Latifa also shuddered uncontrollably because she had imagined Alex doing the same thing to her.

She was fearful and anxious about experiencing the same thing as Lavinia, but a part of her was also looking forward to it.

The young man sensed that Lavinia was now reaching her limit, so he stopped playing with her ears and tail at the same time.

He used his left hand to stroke the young lady's back, calming her own.

Lavinia's tail swayed irregularly like it was a snake that had been startled.

A minute later, it latched onto Alex's left arm, as if using it as a support until it regained its calm.

"I'm sorry, Lavinia," Alex said softly. "You were just so cute that I couldn't stop myself from teasing you."

She didn't answer him right away, still panting for breath. This was the first time she had felt such an overwhelming sense of pleasure. It almost made her crazy.

She made a mental note in the future to tell Alex to do it in moderation, especially if there were other people around.

Deep inside, Lavinia was feeling horribly embarrassed because Latifa, Lumi, and Lotte had seen her in such a state.

If they hadn't been around, she could have endured it for a bit longer. But since they were present, she begged Alex to stop and allow her to retain her dignity.

It took her several minutes to finally regain her calm and composure. When she was certain that she was in full control of her expression, she turned around to look at her lover.

"I'm sorry," Alex apologized a second time. "Forgive me?"

"No." Lavinia replied firmly before grabbing hold of Alex's left hand that was now stroking her belly and bit it.

Of course, she didn't bite hard enough to make it bleed. She controlled her strength so that Alex would only feel a little pain, which he endured properly.

Alex was tempted to use his fingers to play with Lavinia's tongue, since they were already so close to her mouth.

But he had a feeling that if he did that, she would really bite his fingers off out of spite.

'Okay, one step at a time,' Alex thought with a pained look on his face.

When Lavinia finally released his hand, Alex lightly patted her head.

It was a gesture of apology for embarrassing her.

A few minutes later, Alex felt three intense gazes locking onto his body.

Clearly, they belonged to the three fox ladies, who seemed to have made up their mind.

Latifa was thinking of asking Alex to spend the night inside the clock tower so he could also pat her like he did to Lavinia.

The young man at most patted her head when they were together.

He didn't touch her ears, but he would sometimes touch her tail.

And during those times, Latifa had to do her best to stop her body from squirming due to how ticklish it was.

Suddenly, Alex trembled.

"What's wrong?" Lavinia asked. "Did I bite too hard?"

"No," Alex replied. "I just felt that someone was cursing me somewhere."

Lavinia blinked once, then twice, before a giggle escaped her lips.

Latifa, Lumi, and Lotte were also smirking because Alex had messed around with so many people.

“That just means that you’re a bad person,” Lavinia stated. “If you are good, no one will curse at you, right?”

“I think someone still hasn’t learned their lesson,” Alex replied. “Ready for round two?”

He raised both of his hands and made a groping gesture, making Lavinia’s face turn beet red.

“Not here...” Lavinia said in a volume that almost failed to reach the young man’s ears.

Alex blinked.

He was half tempted to carry Lavinia to the secret room in the clock tower, but since the three fox ladies were there, he couldn’t possibly go overboard.

“Ahem.” Lumi coughed lightly.

It was her way of telling Alex to behave himself, especially since there were other ladies around.

‘Well, I guess I’ll just have to wait for a few more days until we head to the Clawford Tribe,’ Alex thought.

He then continued to gently pat Lavinia’s head, making the latter close her eyes and enjoy this intimate moment to her heart’s content.

Chapter 558: Charles’ Confidante

“Have you asked all the questions you wish to know the answers to?” Professor Rowan asked.

“Yes, Professor,” Charles replied. “At least, I now understand a little better just what kind of existence I am.”

The Headmaster’s lips curled into a faint smile.

Not all of those touched by the Void could overcome their fate, but those who succeeded became nearly untouchable.

Charles still had a long way to reach that level. He had to face several challenges to get there. After all, if he truly wanted to master the power bestowed upon him by destiny, he would need to absorb Dungeon Cores.

There was no specific number on how many times a dungeon must be conquered for Charles to finally become a Dungeon Conqueror.

Diona had said that there were hidden conditions that must be met in order to gain the power to defy the fate of the world.

Of course, she had added that she would always assist Charles if he asked for her help. After all, a Void-Touched could only trust another Void-Touched.

Charles had neither agreed nor disagreed with Diona's assertion.

While she had lost her faith in humanity, Charles still had a number of people whom he could trust to keep his secret and stand by his side through thick and thin.

Before he had left, Diona had tried one more time to seduce the young man. Unfortunately, he wasn't in the mood to deal with her antics.

"What will happen to her?" Charles asked.

"She will stay in my domain as a guest," Professor Rowan replied. "She needs to understand that she cannot mess with my students and leave without facing any consequences."

"Don't worry, aside from not being able to leave the domain, she will not suffer. She will be given proper meals as well as basic necessities. This isn't the first time I've dealt with Morax's people. I will make sure to send him a message to pick up one of his members from the academy."

Charles' face turned solemn after hearing that Morax would be coming over.

Diona had already mentioned his name a few times and told him how much she respected the leader of their organization, who had gained the power to dominate humans.

For that was Morax's ability.

His Challenger's Mark had made him a target of all humans, regardless of age, gender, or race.

He had several close brushes with death. Fortunately, he had been able to overcome these challenges and gained the power that made all the Human Kingdoms and Empires fear him.

Aside from Rank 8, Rank 9, Paragons, and those who were blessed to resist mind control, everyone else was fair game.

That was how scary he was.

If he wished for it, he could have become the ruler of any human kingdoms or empires in the continent.

But Morax had no interest in such things and simply cared for the members of his organization.

He was a very rare case in which absolute power didn't go to his head.

Although he didn't want to admit it, Charles couldn't help but respect the man, whom he hadn't even met yet. Anyone else in Morax's shoes would've been sorely tempted to use that power to become the absolute Sovereign of all humans in the world.

"Ah! I almost forgot. There's something that you need to know, Charles." Professor Rowan patted the young man's shoulder. "Most of the members of the Void-Touched hate humans.

“Most of them had suffered from discrimination because of their powers. I’d just like to remind you—never forget that your circumstances are different from theirs.

“You have friends who truly care about you. Don’t forget that they’ll be there to help you when you need it the most.

“If you need my help, feel free to ask as well. But only ask for my help when you are facing something you cannot overcome with your own power. Sometimes in life, we need to face such challenges on our own. That is how people grow.”

The young man nodded because he felt the same.

“Thank you, Professor,” Charles replied. “I will return to the dormitory.”

“Okay.” Professor Rowan smiled faintly. “Before you go, I must ask you to remind Alex to be more lowkey in the future. He stirs up trouble wherever he goes.”

Charles couldn’t help but chuckle after hearing the Headmaster’s words.

His friend didn’t strike him as a troublemaker, especially when compared to someone like Chuck. However, he also couldn’t deny that Alex was always in the heart of every storm sweeping them up.

After bidding farewell to the Headmaster, the young man headed back to the dormitory.

He immediately saw Nessia in the common room. The young lady visibly brightened the moment she saw him.

Charles felt so lucky to have a caring girlfriend like her. This was why he wasn’t tempted by Diona’s advances, even though she was a Rank 7 Beast Conqueror.

The two knew that there were things that they couldn’t talk about in the dormitory, so they asked Chuck if they could borrow his—and Alex’s—room to talk in private.

Chuck agreed without batting an eye. "Feel free to use it. Just make sure that if you two do anything too... ahem, make sure to use Alex's bed, okay? Don't worry. I'll wait for him here and tell him not to disturb the two of you."

The troublemaker patted his chest with confidence, affirming that the two didn't need to worry about anything.

The two lovers glanced at each other before shaking their heads helplessly. They were already used to Chuck's antics, so they thanked him for his consideration.

— — —

Inside Alex's and Chuck's room...

Charles didn't hide anything and told Nessia all the things that Diona had told him.

Of course, that included the Beast Conqueror's advances, which made Nessia scoff.

After he finished his tale, Nessia wrapped her arms around her boyfriend and held him close.

"I'll always be here for you, Charles," Nessia promised. "And I'm sure Alex and the rest are the same. You can feel bad about the multiple betrayals she had experienced in the past, but her circumstances are different from yours."

"Do not ever lose faith in humanity like Diona and the other Void-Touched. If you do, you'll never get your humanity back. Besides..."

The young lady whispered something in Charles' ears, making the latter feel like his cheeks were burning.

"Don't worry." Charles kissed Nessia's cheek. "I won't hate humanity. I'm not like them."

“Good.” Nessia smiled and rested her head on Charles’ shoulder while she continued to hug him.

Charles hugged her back, feeling her warmth and softness. Being with her put his heart at ease, for she was his confidante.

But deep inside his heart, he hoped that there would come a time when he could part with his lover, who had now secured a place in his heart that was slowly being corrupted by the void.

Chapter 559: He Who Dominates Humans [Part 1]

Somewhere in the Kingdom of Solara...

Morax looked up at the clear blue sky while lying down on the rooftop of a random house.

After the tournament ended, he made sure to inform his brothers and sisters about Charles.

While there were very few of them, they also didn’t always stay in the same place.

Most were Wanderers by heart and valued their freedom.

After overcoming the challenges during their childhood, they had become true powerhouses who could go wherever they wanted whenever they wanted.

Since Diona also lived in the Solara Kingdom, Morax had personally gone to find her to tell her about their “handsome” little brother who was currently studying in Frieden Academy.

Diona had always been a sucker for handsome men, so she didn’t hesitate to travel a great distance just to see Charles’ face.

She even brutally trespassed, not at all fearing Professor Rowan’s retaliation. After all, she had Morax to back her up. Even if her brother could not defeat the Paragon of Space in a one-on-one battle, the latter would still consider it needlessly risky to engage him in battle.

Risky enough for even the Paragon of Space to hesitate.

"I wonder how Diona is doing?" Morax muttered. "I'm sure she already met Charles."

Suddenly, a paper crane appeared and descended from the sky. It then hovered in front of him, waiting for its message to be read.

The leader of the Void-Touched cocked his head a little before grabbing the paper crane and absorbing the message that was hidden inside of it.

"You sent a troublemaker here. Come and pick her up."

A faint smile appeared on Morax's face after reading the message from the Paragon of Space.

He had already half-expected that something like this would happen when Diona declared her intention to see Charles. Still, he had hoped that the Beast Conqueror had learned how to be subtle instead of overbearing.

"I guess I'll be making a trip to Frieden Academy." Morax sighed, but the smile lingered on his face. "Might as well since I plan to talk to Charles. By now, Diona has probably already told him everything about our organization."

The handsome man then stood up and did some light stretching.

When he was done, he jumped off the roof and disappeared.

Morax could teleport a mile away from wherever he was. Funnily enough, this ability was not as underwhelming as it sounded since he could do it ten consecutive times without breaks.

He would then have to wait for an hour before he could teleport again.

But Morax had no intention of using this skill all the way to Frieden Academy.

Unlike Diona, who preferred to travel on the back of monsters, he chose to use the “human” way of doing things.

Morax appeared inside the Palace of Solara and headed straight to the private teleportation gate of the Royal Family.

“Good day, Lord Morax,” the staff stationed there greeted him respectfully. “Will you be using the teleportation gate today?”

“Yes, Alfred,” Morax replied. “Take me to the nearest city that can let me teleport directly to the City of Harmonia.”

“Understood.” Alfred nodded.

He then set the coordinates before pressing his hand on the magic crystal that would power up the teleportation gate.

“Have a safe trip, My Lord,” Alfred said with a polite smile.

“Thank you, Alfred,” Morax replied. “I’ll get you some souvenirs when I return.”

Without another word, he stepped into the teleportation gate and vanished completely.

When he was certain that the leader of the Void-Touched was gone, Alfred took out a handkerchief from his pocket and wiped the sweat that had formed on his forehead.

This wasn’t the first time he had dealt with Morax. But the sheer pressure of facing such a powerful individual was something that he couldn’t get used to no matter how many times it happened.

"I just hope no one offends him in the Kingdom of Avalon," Alfred muttered.

— — —

Alex was taking down some notes while looking at what his history professor had written on the whiteboard.

"Remember, this will be in the next test." Professor Arabella fixed her glasses. "Those who fail my test will be 'voluntold' to clean the restrooms of the First Years for three days.

(A/N: Voluntold means that you are "told" to volunteer, often by a superior, and have no real choice on the matter.)

"We are rather short staffed as of late, but we're never short on students. I'm sure they'll happily accept the company of some young people, don't you think?"

Although she was smiling, everyone knew that if they really failed in their upcoming test, cleaning the restrooms would be the least of their worries.

Even the usual carefree Chuck was scribbling in his notebook like he would forfeit his life if he didn't copy down every single one of Professor Arabella's words.

Seeing that the two troublemakers of her class were paying close attention to her, the Professor's smile became a smidge gentler.

A few minutes later, the sound of the bell reached everyone's ears.

"Class is over," Professor Arabelle said. "I'll see you all tomorrow for your test. Study hard, everyone."

She then left the classroom with a spring in her step, not giving a hoot that the habitual slackers were now panicking.

“Alex, help me study!” Chuck grabbed hold of his roommate’s arm. “If I fail, we fail together.”

“Unhand me, you fool!” Alex snapped while trying to free himself from the bastard who was threatening to drag down innocent souls with him. “Why are you asking me when you can just ask Princess Xenia and Mary to help you study?”

“Alex, you don’t understand,” Chuck replied. “Mary might be smart, but I am not so stupid to ask her for help! She always has a whip in her hands during our study sessions, and every time I give the wrong answer, she whips me. She’s a demon, I tell you. She’s not human!”

“Does she wear a dominatrix suit during your study sessions?” Alex asked, genuinely curious.

“How do you know—ahem!” Chuck was able to catch himself in time. To prove his innocence, he decided to begin badmouthing Mary as if there was no tomorrow.

He didn’t notice that Alex was looking at him as if he were already a dead man. There was someone standing behind Chuck with her arms crossed over her chest.

“I see... so you’re courting death, huh?”

Chuck’s body immediately stiffened after hearing the familiar voice.

Alex smiled and patted his friend’s shoulder. “I’ll make sure to put flowers on your grave. Do you like chrysanthemums? I am sure you do.”

Chuck could only shake his head, confused and frightened.

“Well, no matter,” Alex replied. “You will be dead, so who cares what flowers you like?”

Before Chuck could retort, Alex gave Mary a wink and went on his merry way.

A moment later, Chuck's screams shattered the peaceful afternoon as Mary kneaded his head like it was dough.

The Class Officers pretended that they weren't seeing or hearing anything unusual as they also left for their next class.

Charles was walking right beside Nessia when he froze in place. His eyes immediately darted around before settling on something behind him. The look on his face was enough to tell his girlfriend that something was wrong even though she couldn't see what he was looking at.

"What happened, Charles?" Nessia asked.

"Someone dangerous has just entered the academy," Charles replied. "Stick close to Alex for now. I think Morax has come."

Nessia's face paled after hearing the name of the leader of the Void-Touched.

Her boyfriend had told her about Morax's abilities. To put it bluntly, any human was in danger of being mind-controlled by him.

The only saving grace was that Morax wasn't the kind of person who'd go around controlling random people for fun.

But that didn't mean that he would hesitate to do it if push came to shove.

For now, Charles wanted Nessia to be safe and stay as far away from him as possible during the duration of Morax's visit.

Chapter 560: I'm Not A Suspicious Person

"The famous Frieden Academy, huh?" Morax muttered as he made his way down the paved road leading to the gate of the greatest academy within the Kingdom of Avalon.

Upon reaching the gate, he was stopped by two guards who eyed him closely and asked the reason for his visit.

“My name is Morax. Your Headmaster has sent me an invitation,” Morax replied. “Has he informed you about me?”

After hearing his name, the two guards respectfully bowed before opening the gates.

“The Headmaster is expecting you, Lord Morax,” one of the guards said. “Would you like one of us to escort you to his office?”

“No need,” Morax replied. “I can sense his presence from here. I’m sure I can find him without getting lost.”

Before sending the letter, Professor Rowan had already told the guards stationed by the gate and patrolling the academy that he was expecting a VIP Guest.

“His name is Morax. No matter what you do or think, make sure you treat him kindly. Otherwise, you will regret it.”

Since the Headmaster had bothered to personally warn them, the staff took his words to heart.

Even the student councillors had been informed about Morax’s arrival, but were advised to avoid contact with him.

As the leader of the Void-Touched leisurely strolled in the academy, he came across an interesting creature.

“Dim Dim!”

Morax faintly smiled when his gaze landed on the little bun perched on top of a Doom Cow’s head.

Rex, the Forest Wolf, took on a cautious pose while Daisy narrowed her eyes.

“Well, hello there, little friends,” Morax greeted cheerfully. “My name is Morax. I assure all of you that I’m not a suspicious person.”

Dim Dim raised its body and pointed its little stubby hand at the stranger.

“Dim Dim!”

“That’s what all suspicious people say? Well... you do have a point. But I’m not really suspicious, not at all. In fact, I am here because the Headmaster asked me to come.”

Dim Dim glared at Morax and the leader of one of the most feared organizations in the world knew what the little bun was thinking.

“Who do you think you’re fooling, huh?”

Instead of being offended, Morax scratched his head helplessly.

This was his second time seeing Dim Dim, and for some reason, his instincts told him that he should keep an amicable relationship with this creature.

Morax had survived this long by trusting his instinct. Although the little bun looked harmless at a glance, he didn’t dare to underestimate it.

“How can we settle this matter peacefully, Mr...”

“Dim Dim!”

“Right. How can we settle this peacefully Mr. Dim Dim? I have no intention of harming anyone in this academy. I just want to have a talk with the Headmaster because one of my friends is with him.”

“Dim Dim?”

“How do you know that her hair is like a bird’s nest? But don’t let her untidy appearance fool you. If Diona were to take a bath, actually comb her hair, and wear something normal, I am sure she would be a very beautiful lady too!”

Dim Dim smirked mischievously. Clearly, it had thought of a way to deal with the current situation, but Morax was not sure he would like its idea.

“Dim Dim?”

“Of course, I want to settle this peacefully.”

“Kukuku!”

The little bun rubbed its stubby hands together as if it was a merchant about to make a killing.

“Dim Dim~”

“You want me to bribe you so you will let me go?”

“Dim Dim~”

Morax found Dim Dim quite amusing, so he decided to humor its request.

“Here, I have a rare artifact,” Morax offered. “Consider this as a gift from me.”

He thought that giving something like that would impress the little bun. However, instead of being happy, Dim Dim crossed its arms

“No!” Dim Dim replied. “Dim Dim!”

“... Huh?”

The corner of Morax’s lips twitched after hearing that the little bun only accepted Super Rare Gifts as a bribe.

The man who was feared by many human kingdoms and empires couldn’t help but scratch his head a second time. The “police officer” that had caught him sure was picky if even rare artifacts left it unsatisfied.

Even so, he decided to use this opportunity to build a rapport with the little bun. It had been a long time since someone dared to do something like this to him.

After he had become one of the most powerful beings in the world, most people gave him a very wide berth.

So the little bun’s treatment of him felt quite refreshing.

“Since I’m in a good mood, I’ll give you something special.” Morax took out a compass from his storage ring and showed it to Dim Dim. “This is a compass that points to treasures. Are you interested in it?”

Dim Dim’s eyes sparkled after hearing what the compass could do.

The little bun had always wanted to go treasure hunting with its friends. Although Dim Dim could naturally sense the location of valuable gems and ores, it would never ever turn down a compass that could locate treasures.

“Dim Dim!”

“Good. Then we have a deal. However, do note that this isn’t an ordinary treasure hunting compass.”

“Dim Dim?”

The little bun looked at the compass that was handed to it and saw the needle spin a bit before pointing to a direction.

“This compass is very special,” Morax stated. “It points to things that are valued and prized by their owners. In other words, to things that are considered treasures by whoever owns them. Don’t worry, I have two more compasses of the same kind, so I’d like to give this one to you.”

Dim Dim nodded happily and introduced itself—as well as Daisy and Rex—to Mr. No-Longer-Suspicious.

“Nice to meet you, Dim Dim, Daisy, and Rex,” Morax said amicably. “Well then, I still have to meet the Headmaster. But I do hope that we meet again in the future.”

After bidding his goodbye to the little bun, Morax continued his stroll.

Five minutes later, a faint smile appeared on his face. From the beginning, he had been sensing that someone was following him closely but from a safe distance.

He already knew the identity of that person, but he didn’t do anything to stop their pursuit.

In fact, he welcomed it.

After all, he was also curious what this future comrade thought of him and his organization.

Hiding behind a tree, Charles peeked at the leader of the Void-Touched.

Since he had detected Morax from a distance, there was no doubt that the latter had also detected his presence.

It seemed that those who had been touched by the Void could sense each other, allowing them to pinpoint each other's exact location.

But since Morax wasn't trying to capture him, Charles decided to continue tailing the man who was enjoying the scenery inside Frieden Academy.