

Endless 581

Chapter 581: Her Friend's Business Was None Of His Business

Alex and Lavinia's return to the academy marked the end of their short vacation.

Dim Dim arrived outside the young man's room just in time for his return. It entered through the window and jumped from the sill to the top of Alex's head to announce its arrival.

"I'm back, Dim Dim."

"Dim Dim~"

The little bun had many questions. One, had Alex managed to receive the blessings of Lavinia's family? Two, had Alex gotten to use the megaphone, a trump card for special circumstances?

The destructive level of Alex's singing was well known to everyone who had heard it before. The Dim Sum God believed that no Catkin or Beastkin would stand a chance against Alex as soon as he opened his mouth to belt out a tune.

"Yes, I have received their blessings," Alex said. "Diona secretly followed me. I think she really wanted to kill me. Of course, I fought back. Thanks to you, I defeated her. The megaphone you gave me was really amazing, Dim Dim. As soon as I used my Divine Skill, Voice of the End, she didn't stand a chance.

The little bun giggled. Although it hadn't been there, it could imagine the horror the Beast Conqueror must have felt after getting a taste of Alex's amplified voice.

It felt very smug because with this, it had avenged itself and its friends. Diona had been foolish enough to bully them in the Mistral Weave Forest, blissfully unaware that she had provoked a deity.

The Dim Sum God even bought a miniature version of the same megaphone, which it could freely hold in its stubby hands. Just like Cairo, Dim Dim planned to record Alex's singing. If Diona tried to take the young man's life again, the Dim Sum God would have just the perfect tool to deal with her.

Little did Dim Dim know, Diona was so traumatized that she no longer wished to have any dealings with Alex.

In fact, she decided to follow the age-old teachings that had been passed from one Void-Touched generation to the next.

And that teaching was: "If you can't beat them, stay away from them."

"How about you, Dim Dim?" Alex asked while poking the little bun's chubby cheeks. "Did you have fun while we were away? Did you look after Fran like I told you to?"

"Ahem!" Dim Dim saluted.

It had indeed played a lot with the farm animals while keeping a close eye on Fran.

Suddenly, they heard a knock on the door.

"Who is it?" Alex asked.

"It's me, Eva."

As soon as Alex opened the door, Evangeline rushed in and hugged him tightly. She used her foot to close the door behind her.

Alex reached out to lock the door before returning the young lady's hug.

"I missed you," Evangeline said softly.

"I missed you too," Alex replied before kissing her forehead.

The two cuddled for a while before Evangeline reluctantly took a step back to look at her lover.

“So, how did it go?” Evangeline asked.

“It went well,” Alex replied.

“Then, when will you have a talk with my dad?” Evangeline smiled evilly.

“Uhh...” Alex didn’t know how to answer this question.

He had only met Evangeline’s father once, but that had been enough to leave him with a vivid impression of the Vampire Lord. Frankly, Alex didn’t want to meet him again. At least, not now when he was still weak and unable to look at Nero in the eye.

A giggle escaped the young lady’s lips before she cupped Alex’s face and gave his lips a quick peck.

“I’m just joking,” Evangeline said. “If possible, I don’t want you to meet my father. He has never had a good impression of you. Yes, he didn’t like you even when we were kids.”

Alex didn’t know if he should laugh or cry because his girlfriend’s father was someone he didn’t dare to offend.

The mere thought of telling the Vampire Lord that he and Evangeline were now lovers was enough for his legs to turn into jelly.

If Nero felt annoyed or angered by his confession, he was sure that he wouldn’t be able to survive that encounter.

“A-Are you hungry?” Alex tried to change the topic. “Do you need my blood?”

“I’m not hungry right now,” Evangeline replied. “But I don’t mind accepting your invitation.”

Before leaving the academy, Alex had made sure that the young lady was able to drink her fill of his blood.

That way, she wouldn't suffer from withdrawal while he was away.

Just as Alex was about to give a reply, he saw Lumi in the corner of his room with crossed arms.

The moment she sensed that Alex had returned to the academy, she had headed to his room right away.

Unfortunately, Evangeline had been faster and arrived before she could have a talk with Alex.

"Hmph!" Lumi glared at Alex before backing into the wall and disappearing from his room.

The young man and Latifa had an agreement. Whenever he was alone with Evangeline, Lavinia, or Fran, the fox lady and her Alters would not spy or eavesdrop on their conversation.

In return, Alex agreed to sleep at the clock tower at least twice a week, during which he'd pamper Latifa, Lumi, and Lotte.

"Is she gone?" Evangeline whispered in Alex's ear.

She had sensed Lumi's presence earlier but pretended not to notice her.

"She is," Alex confirmed. "Well, then. Shall we go to the old library?"

"Mmm." Evangeline nodded.

Just as Alex was about to bid Dim Dim goodbye, he realized that the little bun was no longer with them.

Dim Dim had actually left the room when Evangeline made her appearance, giving the two some private time.

The little bun knew how to read the mood. This was unlike Alex, who believed that the hysteria and trauma induced by his singing was actually enjoyment and admiration!

When the two arrived at the lobby, they saw Vaan surrounded by ladies.

The delicate-looking young man didn't look out of place at all. The group of them were like flowers in bloom, but he glowed brighter than the rest.

If Alex hadn't known that he was actually a guy, he would have easily been fooled. Vaan's loveliness had landed him on the list of top ten most beautiful students.

Truth be told, Vaan had been waiting for Alex's return, wishing to talk to him. But seeing that Evangeline had beaten him to it, he decided to wait until the young man returned to the dorm later.

On their way to the old library, they came across Chuck and Eleanora.

The two seemed to have just left the library. For some reason, Eleanora's face looked flushed and lively.

Alex was very familiar with that expression since Evangeline looked the same after drinking his blood.

"Yo, Alex!" Chuck exclaimed. "How was your short vacation?"

"It was fun," Alex replied. "How about you? Are you fine, Chuck?"

Alex's gaze landed on Chuck's neck, but he failed to find any bite marks or red spots.

Usually, after Evangeline drank his blood, she would leave behind small puncture wounds. They would linger for a few hours before disappearing completely.

But there was no such thing on Chuck's neck.

'Am I overthinking?' Alex wondered.

"I'm fine." Chuck patted Alex's shoulder, as if reading his mind. "Well, then. I have to go. Xenia and Mary are both waiting for me."

At the mention of the two ladies, a frown appeared on Eleanora's face. But this didn't last for long as she followed behind Chuck, who seemed to be in a hurry to leave.

Alex looked askance at the leaving pair before turning to Evangeline. "Are they...?"

The latter only smiled and pulled him towards their destination.

Clearly, she had no intention of answering this question.

Eleanora may not like Alex, but that didn't mean that she wasn't supportive of Evangeline's feelings for him.

As such, the least that Evangeline could do for her friend was to keep silent. After all, her friend's business was none of Alex's business.

Chapter 582: He Has A Cheat

"I see... Looks like Professor Diona has a death wish, huh?" Evangeline's eyes glowed faintly in the dimness of the library.

"Calm down, Eva," said. "Lavinia's grandfather already reported her to Professor Rowan. Let him deal with her for now."

"Fine..." Evangeline lightly patted Alex's head, which was currently resting on her lap.

They had just finished their drinking session, and Alex seemed a bit tired after losing some of his blood to her. As repayment, she proposed to provide a lap pillow, which the young man happily accepted.

To pass time, Alex started sharing the details of his encounter with Diona during the Etherion Challenge.

He mentioned how lucky he was to have the secret weapon Dim Dim gave him, which helped him win.

"If not for that megaphone, I might have lost against Diona," Alex admitted. "A one-on-one is not a problem. I'd still have a chance. But she wasn't alone. She could command monsters to help her.

"Those Rank 4 Rabid Geese were no joke. If even one of them attacked me while I was fighting with Diona, things could have gotten messy."

"It's a good thing you're safe," Evangeline sighed. "Otherwise, I would have spent my entire life hunting every member of the Void-Touched."

"Including Charles?" Alex blinked.

"Of course, he is an exception," Evangeline answered. "The first one I will kill will be Diona."

Alex then remembered one of Evangeline's endings. After falling onto the Dark Route, she even managed to bring upon the destruction of the Aetherion Empire.

Since she had the talent to take down the continent's strongest empire, the young man didn't take Evangeline's words lightly. Had he died, he believed she'd truly fulfill her vow to hunt down the members of the Void-Touched.

It might not happen in a day, a week, a month, or a year.

But it would definitely happen without a doubt.

“Don’t worry. I’m sure she already learned her lesson... probably.” Alex tried to assure Evangeline that Diona would no longer try to attack him.

That way, she wouldn’t do anything reckless, which might result in the members of the Void-Touched hunting her instead.

“So, you’re going with Fran to the Shadow Forest next week?” Evangeline asked.

“Yes,” Alex replied. “We’ll be away for four days.”

“I guess I should also visit home and see my father.” Evangeline rubbed Alex’s chest playfully. “Should I tell him about us?”

“...”

“I’m just joking. I’m sure he already knows about it since Eleanora reports directly to him.”

“H-Huh?!”

Alex almost had a heart attack after hearing the young lady’s revelation. If the Vampire Lord really knew that he and Eva had become lovers, wouldn’t his life be hanging by a thread?

“Relax. He won’t hurt you... for now.”

“Hey! Don’t raise a death flag!”

A giggle escaped Evangeline’s lips, amused with how seriously Alex took her words.

This was why Evangeline planned to return home during their four-day vacation scheduled next week. She wanted to know what her father really thought about Alex.

At the very least, she would ask him to not make things difficult any more difficult for her boyfriend. Alex was already in the Kill List of the Demon Worshipers.

If her father joins them, the young man would have no choice but to stay inside the academy until he graduates.

The two playfully bantered for a bit and talked about stories from after they parted ways.

Evangeline talked about her father training her in the vampiric arts. However, she still couldn't use her full powers because she refused to drink the blood of others.

This frustrated her father to no end until he decided to just let Evangeline do whatever she wanted.

It was no use trying to force someone to drink blood when they were adamant to take blood pills instead.

But after reuniting with Alex, the vampire lady had finally unlocked more of her potential, which she sometimes trained in the clock tower's special room at night.

Her father's lessons were still clear in her memories, and after training her vampiric powers accordingly, she was starting to get the hang of it.

"You should be careful when you go to the clock tower," Evangeline warned. "Lumi has been on edge these past few days. It seems that she's having an Alex Withdrawal Syndrome."

The young man couldn't help but smirk after hearing this piece of news. Once upon a time, Lumi made things difficult for him.

But the tables flipped the moment she started to fall for Alex. Although she would still nag and quarrel with him from time to time, she would cuddle with him without saying anything whenever they were alone.

Alex enjoyed those moments. To be specific, he enjoyed Lumi's attitude. She had always been strong-willed and straightforward. But when it came to the person she liked, she'd pretend to be hostile in public but be affectionate and cuddly in private.

This contrast was why Alex liked her very much. Perhaps due to the scarcity of their intimate moments, he viewed every moment of it as precious memories.

"By the way, I think Charles' powers are growing very fast," Evangeline stated. "Is that one of the qualities of the Void-Touched?"

"Charles is a bit different," Alex sighed. "He has a cheat."

"A cheat?" Evangeline blinked. "What's that?"

"Eva, what I'm going to tell you is something that you mustn't share with others," Alex said in a serious tone. "Do you understand?"

"Okay." Evangeline nodded.

Alex sighed a second time. "Actually, Charles is a Dungeon Conqueror. His powers grow stronger the more Dungeon Cores he absorbs. Also, after absorbing those Dungeon Cores, they don't really disappear.

"These dungeons appear in a different dimension and continue to grow at a fast rate. The more floors this dungeon possesses, the more monsters spawn inside of it. And Charles... can summon those monsters and fight for him."

Evangeline's eyes widened in shock. That power simply broke the rules of engagement.

If Charles were to absorb the Dungeon Core of a high-ranking Dungeon, wouldn't that allow him to summon thousands... even tens of thousands of dungeon monsters in battle?

"He's going to be a one-man army," Evangeline muttered in disbelief.

"That's right." Alex nodded. "The first Dungeon Core he absorbed probably has five floors now. On top of that, every dungeon also gives Charles a passive boost, increasing his strength and fighting prowess."

Evangeline now understood why Alex had asked her to keep her lips sealed. Charles was meant to be a powerhouse that could move across the world unhindered.

Any force would want to have someone like him under their command. If they were to capture him while he was still weak and brainwash him...

It was quite possible for a Dungeon Outbreak to wipe out major cities in the continent!

Chapter 583: Diona's Punishment

Inside the Headmaster's Office...

Diona looked down on the hands she rested on her lap. Professor Rowan had summoned her, saying he wanted to talk to her about the incident in the Clawford Tribe.

"I believe we had an understanding, Ms. Diona," Professor Rowan said calmly. "Did you take my words lightly?"

Diona remained silent. Lying didn't work on Paragons, and making an excuse was beneath her. But she was also too prideful to admit her wrong.

A sigh escaped the Headmaster's lips, conflicted about how he'd deal with the young lady in front of him. Despite his warnings, she still dared to attack one of his students.

"Won't you at least say anything?" Professor Rowan asked.

"I... I promise I will no longer harm Alex Stratos and his friends," Diona replied.

“And why should I believe you?” Professor Rowan arched an eyebrow. “Last time...”

“Last time, I didn’t promise anything,” Diona interjected. “But now, I promise that I will keep my word.”

The Headmaster of the Academy tried to recall his meeting with Morax, where Diona had also been present. After he had sealed her powers and told her what she mustn’t do as a Professor in the academy, the young lady had indeed uttered no agreement.

She made no promise to not harm Alex and his friends. At least, she was telling the truth about that part.

“I can tell that you’re being sincere.” Professor Rowan rested his chin on the back of his intertwined hands. “But a punishment is still in order.”

Diona clenched her fingers slightly.

She had expected this. Sealing her powers was one thing, but the Headmaster never let disobedience go unpunished.

“For the next three months,” Professor Rowan continued, his tone calm and utterly merciless, “your salary will be withheld.”

“... That’s it?”

“That’s it.”

Diona raised her head to look at the Headmaster. She couldn’t believe that her punishment was only three months of docked pay.

She thought her powers would be further sealed, weakening her by another rank.

Was this even a punishment? Morax had given the members of the Void-Touched their own bank accounts, and he had always been ridiculously rich and generous. Money was the last thing Diona lacked.

In fact, it wouldn't be an issue even if she wasn't paid for a few years as a Professor.

"Are you not satisfied with your punishment?" Professor Rowan smirked. "Do you want me to..."

"I'm not complaining!" Diona hurriedly replied. "I was just surprised."

Professor Rowan stood up and walked toward the window of his office. He stared at the buildings of the academy, where the students attended classes.

"My students are very precious to me, Ms. Diona," Professor Rowan said after a minute of silence. "It's my responsibility to keep them safe while they're within the walls of the academy."

"But outside the walls, it's inevitable to face the dangers of the world. I'm not growing delicate flowers in a greenhouse. They need to overcome challenges to grow. If they can't tackle their problem with their current strength, there's nothing I can do about it."

"I protect my students the best I can, but they're on their own in places that I couldn't see. I have an idea why you're targeting Alex, but let me tell you something."

The Headmaster turned around to gaze at the Beast Conqueror, whose face was now as pale as a sheet of paper.

"If not for Alex, Charles wouldn't be alive now," Professor Rowan declared. "Do you know what students have to do to be a scholarship student? They must first dive down inside the Dungeon of Beginnings?"

After hearing the Headmaster's words, Diona's eyes widened in shock.

“Y-You mean Charles... entered a dungeon before becoming a student of the academy?!” Diona asked in a trembling voice. “H-How did he survive?!”

“Alex helped him,” Professor Rowan smiled faintly. “He brought a party with him to assist Charles in his dungeon expedition. Even if you don’t tell me, I already know that Charles is taking the path of a Dungeon Conqueror.

“But remember this—when the monsters from the lower floors ascended to Charles’ location, it was Alex and his friends who fought the monsters tooth and nail to protect him. They could have left him behind, yet they fought until they bled.

“A Dungeon Outbreak. Any other Adventurer would’ve felt despair when met with such a calamity during a dungeon expedition. Charles was only a Rank 1 then. Do you think he could have survived alone?”

Diona bit her lip. There was no need to give an answer.

Without a doubt, Charles would have died inside the Dungeon of Beginnings. There was no way he could survive such a calamity.

“Diona, the person you tried to kill is Charles’ benefactor.” Professor Rowan sighed. “Now, do you understand why Charles trusts Alex very much?”

Diona didn’t answer. She couldn’t.

She didn’t know that Alex had played a role in Charles’ survival during his first major tribulation as a Dungeon Conqueror.

As one of the Void-Touched, she understood too well how scary the skill, Challenger’s Mark, was.

She had been hunted by countless monsters when she first awakened her powers, and she almost died many times because of it.

If not for the help of other people, she wouldn't be where she was today.

"You may leave." Professor Rowan waved his hand. "I don't know how you will treat Alex from this day onward. But the least you can do is leave him be. Stop targeting him and his friends. They were the ones who helped him pass the trial and become a scholarship student."

Diona nodded before leaving the Headmaster's office. The moment she closed the door behind her, she used the wall of the hallway to support her body.

Her legs had lost their strength, so she couldn't walk at the moment.

The Headmaster's revelation was still swirling inside her head.

She couldn't help but feel ashamed.

She couldn't help but feel guilty.

She couldn't help feeling that he had wronged the wrong person.

Now that she knew the truth about Charles' story, she could no longer treat Alex as someone that must be eliminated.

After a few minutes, she finally regained enough composure to walk on her two legs.

When she had finally left the tower where the Headmaster's office was located, Professor Rowan heaved a sigh.

"Happy?" Professor Rowan looked at the corner of his office.

A moment later, Morax appeared. He had been there ever since Diona entered the Headmaster's Office.

"Happy," Morax replied. "I owe you one, Professor."

Professor Rowan sighed helplessly before glancing in the direction where Diona headed.

He hoped that after this incident, one of the troublemakers under his wing would finally be able to spend a few days of peace... before he once again ventured into the outside world where danger lurked everywhere.

Chapter 584: Gift Of Apology

"Alex, please accept this gift of apology!"

Alex blinked once then twice as Lavinia, and Evangeline pulled him behind their backs. The two ladies took a fighting stance as they faced off against Diona, who was holding out a wrapped gift in her hands.

"Don't come closer or we will attack," Lavinia warned.

"I don't know what's inside that box," Evangeline said coldly. "But don't think that we will be tricked by your schemes."

It had been three days since Alex's and Lavinia's return.

Their Bestiary Lessons had just ended, but Diona asked Alex to remain because she had something to tell him.

Charles wanted to stay behind as well. But when he saw that Lavinia, and Evangeilne had already moved to Alex's side as if they had come to an understanding, he allowed himself to be dragged away by Nessia to give them some privacy.

"N-No you got it wrong," Diona hastily explained as she sensed the killing intent and hostility that was oozing out of the two girls. "I really want to apologize to him. It was wrong of me to have jumped into conclusions!"

“What are you talking about?” Lavinia asked. “If you want to explain yourself, at least do it in a way that we can understand.”

Evangeline nodded to back Lavinia up while also making sure that Alex was right behind her.

Alex didn’t know how to feel about being protected by his two lovers. But since they were genuinely worried about him, he decided to stay put and not get in their way.

If something really happened, it would not be too late for him to take action as well.

“I was wrong in my assumption that Alex would hinder Charles from realizing his destiny,” Diona continued.

“I didn’t know that Alex had helped Charles pass the trials in the Dungeon of Beginnings. I only knew about it from the Headmaster, which made me realize that I was wrong this whole time in thinking that you are a hindrance to Charles.”

After hearing her explanation, Alex finally understood that Diona truly wished to apologize to him. If he hadn’t helped Charles back then, the young man would have died inside the Dungeon of Beginnings and his story would have come to an end.

“Girls, I think she really wants to apologize,” Alex said calmly. “But if you’re worried, we can just ask her to open the gift in front of us to see if it isn’t anything dangerous.”

Lavinia and Evangeline glanced at each other before nodding.

“Very well, please open your gift in front of us,” Lavinia stated.

While she thought that Diona might have turned over a new leaf, they simply couldn’t take her words for granted.

Evangeline had the same thought, so she didn’t lower her guard.

"I understand," Diona replied before unwrapping her gift. She had gone all around the city and visited several shops that noblewomen patronized regularly and noblemen patronized only when special festivals and birthdays were coming up.

She didn't know what Alex wanted, but she thought that he would appreciate this gift even if he personally didn't like it.

When the three teenagers finally saw what her apology gift was, even Lavinia and Evangeline became speechless.

What they saw were dozens of beautiful bottles with labels from famous brands. Evangeline's eyes practically lit up when she scanned the contents of the box.

Alex had no idea what he was looking at, but the vampire lady almost took the box from Diona's hands.

The Beast Conqueror had really given this a lot of thought. Originally, she hadn't had an idea what young men liked.

Because of this, she had asked her lady students what gift was best to give to guys with girlfriends.

To her surprise, these noble ladies also didn't know what gifts noblemen would like to receive either! However, they told Diona that their boyfriends would give them perfume, cosmetics, and jewelry during special occasions like anniversaries.

Thinking that the way to gain Alex's forgiveness was through his girlfriends, Diona had gone to town and bought the only most expensive brands of perfume, and cosmetics that she could find!

"Eva, do you know what those bottles are?" Alex asked.

"They are perfumes and beauty products from luxury brands," Evangeline answered. "They are also very expensive. A single bottle cost a thousand gold coins."

“What?” Lavinia almost didn’t believe her friend’s words. “They’re that expensive? What’s in them? The elixir of life?”

Due to her sharp sense of smell, the Catkin didn’t have a habit of using beauty products and perfumes. But that was slowly changing after she had met Alex.

As a young lady, she of course wanted to look good in front of her boyfriend.

Evangeline was an expert when it came to cosmetics because she had often needed to hide the dark circles under her eyes when she had been depending on blood pills to sate her cravings for blood.

Now that she could drink Alex’s blood, her skin was smooth and healthy, and her face had also become very radiant as well.

Even so, who wouldn’t want cosmetics from luxury brands?

“Understood.” Lavinia coughed lightly. “We will accept your apology gift.”

The Catkin moved to take Diona’s gift, silently counting the number of bottles inside the box. After seeing that there were exactly a dozen of them, she gave Evangeline a brief nod as if the inspection had been completed.

“I hope that you will no longer target Alex since the misunderstanding has already been cleared,” Evangeline said.

“I won’t,” Diona replied. “I promise.”

Diona shifted her gaze to Alex before giving him an apologetic bow. “I hope that you continue to help Charles from this moment onwards. Also, I would appreciate it if you can put in a good word for me”

The Dungeon Conqueror blushed a bit because asking the person whom she had tried to kill to act as her wingmen was embarrassing even for her.

“I won’t promise anything,” Alex stated. “But I will tell him that you and I no longer bear any hostilities with each other. Maybe that will also give him a better impression of you.”

“Good.” Diona nodded. “Thank you, Alex. And I hope that my gift will be helpful to you. I know that teenagers often think passion is the only thing needed in a relationship, but being attentive cannot be a bad thing, especially when you have multiple partners.”

Diona smiled faintly before walking away. She had already done her best to make up with Alex, and she hoped that by doing so, her relationship with Charles would also improve.

When they could no longer see her, Evangeline moved closer to inspect the bottles and gave them a sniff.

“What do you think, Lavinia?” Evangeline asked. “Is this legit?”

“There’s only one way to find out,” Lavinia replied, her face turning a shade redder.

Both ladies then glanced at Alex, who immediately felt that he was in danger.

“Uh... I forgot that I have to pick up Dim Dim in Fran’s farm,” Alex said because the way the two ladies were looking at him were like wolves about to attack a sheep. “S-See you later at the dormitory.”

Alex didn’t hesitate and left in haste. He had a feeling that had he stayed a second longer, Lavinia and Evangeline might have dragged him to the old library and tested the various beauty products on him.

Noelle had once done that to him on Earth. But even as he was running away, he couldn’t help but smile wistfully at the memory.

Chapter 585: Prepare For Trouble, And Make It Double [Part 1]

“Hmmm.”

Dim Dim was currently scrolling through its God Shop, browsing for things to buy.

Since it gained God Points every time Alex earned Arcana Points, Dim Dim originally had a considerable sum in his account.

However, the megaphone it gifted to Alex had cost it quite a bit. Miscellaneous things also added up easily. Now, the little bun's balance was down to 4,740 God Points.

Alex looked at the serious Dim Dim in amusement. Curious about what brought upon such a rare expression, he peeked from behind to see what it was planning to buy.

There, in the blue window screen in front of Dim Dim, was an earmuff marked with a 90% discount. It looked very cute, so he could understand why the little bun seem to like it.

Since it was from the God Shop, it had the special ability to automatically resize itself to fit its wearer. This was a great thing because anyone could use them without worrying about whether it would fit them or not.

The little bun was thinking of buying two, giving one to its best friend Eiko. Now, its only problem was which colors to choose.

Using its stubby little hand to tap the screen, it ended up picking a pink earmuff for its best friend and a white one for itself.

The two earmuffs cost 200 God Points, much lower than the 2,000 God Points it would've paid otherwise.

After adding the two items to its cart, Dim Dim looked at other discounted items.

Alex decided to leave his partner to its own devices and headed out. Since he had free time, he thought it would be a good idea to spend some time with Latifa, Lotte, and Lumi in the clock tower.

The moment the young man left his room, Dim Dim tapped on the utilities section of its God Shop.

It directly skipped to the items on sale, planning to maximize its small pool of resources.

“Um?” Dim Dim’s little stubby hand paused when it saw the discounted item in front of it.

It was a Mini Megaphone, similar to the one that it had gifted Alex. Just like the earmuffs, it was on 90% discount, making the little bun hesitate.

After a short internal battle, Dim Dim added the item to its cart before browsing the shop

Sometimes, a bun got to do what a bun got to do.

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Inside the Clock Tower...

The moment Alex stepped inside the clubroom, he immediately sensed that something was going on.

All the ladies, including Eleanora, Princess Xenia, and Mary, crowded on Latifa’s bed, while the boys remained seated at the round table.

The ladies were actively talking to each other, but he couldn’t hear anything.

‘Nessia probably set up some kind of Soundproofing Formation,’ Alex thought before sitting beside Chuck. “What are they talking about?”

“Lavinia and Evangeline came earlier with some cosmetics and perfume. When Xenia saw it, they immediately started discussing what brands best worked for her.

“The other girls became interested and joined the conversation. But since we guys are here, they decided to huddle over Latifa’s absolute territory.”

Alex couldn’t help but smirk after hearing the words “absolute territory.” The bed was indeed the young lady’s territory, and she didn’t really allow anyone to sit or lie down on her own bed.

Of course, he was the only exception. Even if he didn’t take the initiative, either Lumi or Lotte would drag him to Latifa’s bed to spend some intimate moments with him. But only when there were no other people around.

Glancing at his other comrades, Alex was a bit surprised to see Renard actually reading a book and taking notes.

Charles was helping him study, explaining the formula used to solve a mathematical problem.

Seeing Mr. I-Have-Trust-Issues opening up to people, Alex couldn’t help but feel proud. Renard had truly gone a long way from his lone wolf lifestyle.

Chuck moved a bit closer and whispered a piece of gossip in Alex’s ears.

“Renard has also been exchanging letters with Melissa,” Chuck whispered. “I saw one of her letters tucked inside the book he was using earlier. It seems like they became very close friends after the tournament.”

“I see.” Alex smirked.

Melissa was one of the Female Leads that could be unlocked in Renard’s route. Now that the Saintess and the Barbarian Princess had entered Renard’s inner circle, Alex was very curious about which route Renard would take in the future.

“How about you?” Alex asked. “Aren’t you going to study? The exams are near.”

"Please don't remind me," Chuck anxiously turned his head to look at Mary, who seemed engrossed in the talk about cosmetics and perfume.

"I've been studying everyday after class. Mary told me that if I failed the exam, she would cut IT off. She's been harsh on me lately, even resorting to... physical means to force me to study."

As a man, Alex perfectly understood what Chuck was referring to. As to Mary using physical means, Dim Dim once told him about an incident. It had seen Mary whipping Chuck inside an abandoned room in the academy.

"Do your best." Alex patted his friend's shoulder.

As a comrade, he decided to keep Chuck's dark secret and told Dim Dim to not spread it to anyone aside from him.

However, Alex mentioned that if Dim Dim ever came across a similar incident like that, it should report it to him right away.

Why?

Because it was perfect blackmail material!

"Why are you grinning like that?" Chuck blinked. "For some reason, you're making me feel anxious."

"You do?" Alex's grin widened a bit. "Do you have a reason to be anxious?"

"O-Of course not," Chuck replied. "Just who do you think I am? I'm not scared of anything!"

"Okay." Alex gave Chuck the 'Whatever you say my friend' gaze before shifting his attention to the ladies.

Suddenly, the entire clock tower seemed to shake, which prompted everyone to grab hold of something to support themselves.

A red portal then appeared above the round table, which made Alex's eye widen in shock.

'W-Why is this portal opening?!' Alex gasped internally. 'This should only happen during our second year. Why is it opening now?!'

One of the main reasons why Alex chose the clocktower as the clubroom was because it would become the Headquarters of the Protagonist during their second year when things in the academy took a turn for the worse.

The red portal's appearance was one of the events that should only happen during their second year in the academy. And now that it had shown itself in advance, Alex felt a dread creep up his body.

Beyond the portal was a world that many players called Reverse Arcana.

This world looked exactly like Arcana, with one major difference. Everyone's personality in that parallel world was the complete opposite of the one they had in Arcana.

For example, a timid, shy person would be outspoken and social in Reverse Arcana.

The factions of good and evil are also reversed.

There, the Demon Worshipers was a righteous order, while the Crusaders were the evil Faction.

Naturally, the Heroes and Heroines in Reverse Arcana were the opposite of their counterparts in Arcana, which made it very dangerous.

However, there were events that needed to be dealt with in Reverse Arcana, preventing several major incidents from manifesting in the original world.

But, just as Alex thought about what to do next, the red portal suddenly disappeared, as if it never appeared in the first place.

A few minutes later, the young man was finally able to regain his composure, thinking that the problem had resolved itself.

However, this thought was completely broken when he noticed two ladies standing near the exit of the Clocktower.

“Ara Ara?”

“Wow! Papa is here nano!”

Latifa, Lumi, and Lotte looked in disbelief as their gazes landed on the two strangers who had appeared inside the clock tower.

Alex almost stopped breathing for a brief moment because he recognized the two ladies in front of him.

One looked like a mature version of Latifa, roughly in her late twenties.

The other was a young version of her, which seemed to be around six to eight years old.

How could Alex possibly not know who they were?

They were Latifa’s future Alters, Lulu and Lala, and their appearance made everyone inside the clubroom wonder if they were having a mass hallucination or not.

Chapter 586: Prepare For Trouble, And Make It Double [Part 2]

The ladies and the gents all looked at Alex, who was currently doing his best to remain calm.

He normally had nothing interesting to look at. But with this add-on, they could probably stare at him for another day.

On his lap sat a six to eight-year old version of Latifa, hugging him tightly.

“Heh, I love you, Papa,” Lala said with a face full of satisfaction. “Hehehe... it feels so nice to hug you like this nano.”

“Papa?”

Lavinia and Evangeline sharply turned their heads to Latifa, who was just as confused as they were.

Lotte and Lumi stood at the side with serious expressions, recognizing that their two guests were also Alters.

“Ara? Why does everyone look so serious?” the mature version of Latiffa, Lulu, said before sitting beside Alex with a smile. “Everyone, calm down. We’re not here to hurt anyone. Isn’t that right, Papa?”

Alex’s body subconsciously shuddered. Lulu’s character was nearly the same as the one he remembered in the game.

And since she was Latifa’s mature version, she looked... incredibly good.

Truth be told, Alex played gymnastics with his eyes, darting around everywhere but her face and body. He could just feel that the consequences of one wrong look would be very dangerous.

Not to mention, Lala was cuddling with him, and he didn’t have the heart to push the adorable girl away.

The real Lala was a timid girl and embodied Latifa’s shyness from when she was young. Since this was the reverse world Lala, she was a bit bolder and clingier than her normal counterpart.

As for Lulu... she was an exception.

She hid her intelligence and acted like a fawning older sister who liked to spoil anyone younger than her.

But the truth couldn't be any different. She was the most ruthless among all the Alters, possessing powers that bent the rules of reality.

Right now, Alex feared that this Lulu was the Femme Fatale version. After all, that meant that she would be extremely dangerous.

This Lulu wouldn't bother to hide behind charades and would simply smile while tearing her opponent's body apart, limb by limb.

"R-Right, guys. Let's all... calm down." Ironically, Alex struggled to remain calm despite doing his best.

Since they were Latifa's Alters, they probably wouldn't hurt Latifa, Lumi, and Lotte.

But the same couldn't be said for everyone else inside the clubroom. The two newcomers might be viewing them as enemies.

Lala giggled, then planted a kiss on the young man's left cheek.

"Papa is so smart nano!" Lala praised. "The Papa I'm used to is very ruthless. This caring version of him makes me very happy nano!"

"Indeed." Lulu moved closer to Alex and kissed his right cheek. "I wouldn't mind taking this version of Papa back home with us."

Lavinia and Evangeline couldn't help their temper from slightly rising every time the two strangers messed with Alex. But, just as they were about to act, Lumi, and Lotte moved in front of them, and blocked their path.

“Don’t,” Lumi warned. “They’re strong. Very strong.”

Lotte nodded. “Don’t mess with them.”

The current Latifa was a Rank 3 Celestial Walker. This allowed her to manifest two Alters, namely Lotte and Lumi.

Since Lulu and Lala were here, this meant that they manifested after Latifa surpassed Rank 3. There were two of them, so the Latifa in the other world was definitely a Rank 5 Celestial Walker... or higher.

The higher Latifa’s rank, the stronger her Alters. In other words, the two guests were extremely powerful in battles.

They didn’t know the abilities of the two Laterals. However, the mere sight of the mature version of Latifa made even Lumi feel anxious.

“B-By the way, Lala and Lulu, what are the two of you doing here?” Alex asked as he did his best to remain calm.

There had been no instance in the game when the portal that led to the Reverse Arcana opened up during the Protagonist’s First Year in the academy.

This only happened when they were Second Years, and much stronger than their current selves.

“Ah, you see... Papa went on a journey and told us not to look for him nano,” Lala replied. “I got very lonely, so I asked Lulu-Nee to help me look for Papa. But, the Papa in our world is very scary when angry, so we thought that going here to check on our younger and kinder Papa is safer.”

Lala hugged Alex happily. “This version of Papa is indeed very nice. My original Papa doesn’t slap me like he always does to Lumi-Nee, but he also won’t let me sit on his lap like this. If I do so without his permission, he would probably strangle me before slamming my head on a wall.”

Alex couldn't help but shudder after hearing Lala's revelation. Even Lumi was shocked at the little girl's revelation of how Alex treated her in Reverse Arcana.

"Indeed..." Lulu tilted her head slightly before shifting her gaze to Chuck and Renard. "Heh... these boys are also here, huh? Chuck the Dominator, who whips Mary, Eleanora, and Princess Xenia daily to discipline them like dogs.

"And Renard who trusts everyone no matter how many times he's betrayed. Even I feel sorry for that guy. I hope this version of him isn't that stupid."

Then her gaze landed on Charles, making her frown.

"I've been meaning to ask earlier, but who are you?" Lulu inquired. "I never saw you in Reverse Arcana."

Alex blinked once then twice before a dawn of realization descended on him. When he first appeared in Arcana, his priority was to save Charles and prevent him from dying in the Dungeon of Beginnings.

The him in Reverse Arcana probably wouldn't give a damn if Charles died or not. That meant that the young man had followed his original destiny of dying in the Dungeon of Beginnings in that world.

"Hmm... I also don't remember seeing him nano." Lala glanced at Charles with great curiosity. "Could he be one of those 'Exceptions'?"

Lulu smiled faintly before making a gesture for Charles to come closer to her. Naturally, the young man didn't do as she was told, which made the smile on Lulu's face widen a bit.

A moment later, Charles cried out in pain as both of his legs bent into an impossible angle, which made Lala, who was sitting on Alex's lap, giggle as if she was seeing something very funny.

Chapter 587: The Opposite Of Kindness Was Cruelty

Charles' scream immediately triggered Nessia to go for the kill.

However, just as she was about to cast a spell, her body stiffened, and she collapsed on the floor.

Renard also planned to lunge at Lulu, but was also hit by paralysis. He, too, ended up on the floor in a heap.

Chuck hurriedly grabbed Princess Xenia and Mary and pulled them behind him. Likewise, Eleanora moved in front of Evangeline, ready to attack at a moment's notice.

Latifa, Lumi, and Lotte had also taken a fighting stance, prepared to clash with Lulu. But before they could do anything, they found themselves feeling incredibly drowsy.

"Don't move, sisters," Lala said, still sitting on Alex's lap. "We don't want to hurt any of you."

Lala's power revolved around status debuffs.

Paralysis, Sleep, Slow, Poison, Silence, and even Petrify.

Although she might seem harmless, she was the Alter Latifa created after reaching Rank 5.

This meant that her powers were enough to cripple anyone below Rank 5, making her a very deadly adversary to those with lower ranks.

"I just want to know if he's an exception," Lulu said with a smile. "Usually, people of his kind either show overwhelming power when they're hurt or are incredibly weak by nature. I want to know if this guy is the latter."

Alex was about to tell Lulu to stop. But when he tried, he failed to make a sound. A moment later, he felt his entire body stiffen, preventing him from even lifting a finger.

"Shhh, Papa." Lala pressed her finger on Alex's lips before planting a kiss on his cheek. "I don't want to hurt my beloved Papa, so please don't do anything nano."

Since Alex couldn't move, the only thing he could do was glare at Lulu, which only made the Alter giggle.

“It seems that this level of pain is still not enough for you to manifest your powers,” Lulu shifted her attention to Charles, who was doing his best to endure the pain he was feeling. “I guess we have to turn it up a notch.”

Just as everyone thought that Lulu was going to do more harm to Charles, like breaking his arms, the portal at the entrance of the clubroom activated.

Lala and Lulu glanced in that direction. When the two Alters saw who appeared, they flinched.

Dim Dim frowned immediately when it saw Charles groaning in pain, and Nessia and Renard collapsed on the floor.

It then looked at Alex and realized that the young man seemed unable to move. A little girl that looked like Latifa sat on his lap.

Dim Dim jumped and landed on top of the table so it could understand the situation better.

After realizing that Latifa, Lumi, and Lotte were also in a state of paralysis, it glared at Lala and Lulu, then pointed its little finger at them.

“Dim Dim!” Dim Dim shouted, demanding an explanation.

Lala, who had been smiling a few seconds ago, whimpered and buried her head in Alex’s chest. Her body shuddered as she held tightly to her Papa, whom she was using as a pillar of support to control her fear.

Meanwhile, Lulu’s face turned pale as she hastily removed her control over Charles’ legs, making the latter grit his teeth as he endured the pain.

“Dim Dim!” Dim Dim shouted one more time. This time, it was pointing at Lulu and asking her what she had done to its friends.

"I-I was just teasing them a bit, Sir," Lulu replied, her voice no longer confident and arrogant like it used to be. "You know, just a greeting."

Dim Dim narrowed its eyes. It was giving Lulu the "I'm not hearing any of your bullsh*t" gaze, which made the latter flinch as if she had been slapped by an invisible hand.

"D-Don't worry, I can fix him!" Lulu immediately snapped her fingers and Charles' bent legs returned to their original form.

The sound of bones popping as they were reconnected made those who were still conscious frown collectively.

"All of his bones are now mended, Sir," Lulu explained. "I promise there will be no lasting side effects. Like I said earlier, I was just testing if he was one of those 'Exceptions' that we have heard about.

Alex was now free from paralysis, allowing him to look down at the trembling girl on his lap. He then shifted his gaze to Lulu, whose face was drained of all colors.

She was looking at Dim Dim as if looking at someone whom she shouldn't offend no matter what.

That was when it hit him.

Dim Dim was a very kind, friendly, caring, and loving God.

If Dim Dim existed in Reverse Arcana, its personality would simply become the opposite of the Dim Dim on their side.

The opposite of kindness was cruelty.

The opposite of friendliness was hostility.

The opposite of caring was indifference.

The opposite of loving... was something far worse.

Alex felt a cold shiver crawl down his spine as that realization settled in his mind.

If Reverse Arcana truly mirrored everything in Arcana, then the Dim Dim that existed there wouldn't be the good-natured God that liked to go on Patrols with Daisy and Rex.

It also wouldn't be the kind Dim Sum God who liked children and always played with them.

The Dim Dim in Reverse Arcana would be a calamity.

Now he could understand why Lulu and Lala, who had seemed like opponents whom no one could defeat a moment ago, had completely reversed their attitudes.

"Papa... make it stop nano..." Lala whimpered while holding onto Alex's clothes. "Lala is scared nano."

Alex swallowed. This was the first time he had ever seen Lulu and Lala this terrified.

Truly terrified.

Dim Dim hopped down from the table.

Each tiny step it took echoed in the silent room.

Tap.

Tap.

Tap.

It then jumped on top of Alex's head and looked down on Lala, who immediately screamed in fear before fainting.

It then glanced at Lulu, which made the latter take a few steps away to distance itself from the little bun, who had crushed her arms and legs back in Reverse Arcana.

She could never forget that moment. So whenever she had the chance, she inflicted it upon others to make them feel the pain she had gone through back then.

A few tense seconds followed when suddenly the clock tower once again trembled.

The red portal again appeared on top of the round table. From there, someone stepped out of it.

This time, it was none other than Latifa.

The version of her in Reverse Arcana.

Seeing Lala unconscious in Alex's arms and Lulu looking pale and anxious, the beautiful lady smiled faintly. She then lazily glanced at her version in Arcana before winking cheekily.

"Play time's over," the Reverse Latifa said calmly. "Time to go back."

With a gesture of her hand, she had the unconscious Lala fly into her arms.

Lulu hurriedly jumped on top of the round table and entered the portal without looking back.

Latifa gave Alex an apologetic gaze before mouthing something at him.

When she finished relaying the message she wanted to say, she also entered the portal and disappeared alongside it.

Lotte hurriedly went to check on Renard's condition, while Lumi rushed to Alex's side to make sure he wasn't hurt.

"I'm fine, Lumi," Alex said. "I'm not hurt."

He was still a little shaken from what had just happened, especially by reverse Latifa's words.

"I'll wait for you on the other side," Latifa had said. "You still have many unfinished business to settle."

He didn't know why she had said that, but who could ever feel calm after hearing about unfinished businesses?

Right now, he didn't have any connection to Reverse Arcana. But her words were like a prophecy that would happen no matter what.

Even Dim Dim, who had come to the clock tower to share Fran's freshly baked food with its friends, felt something ominous waiting on the other side of the red portal.

A world that the Dim Dim of Reverse Arcana created, which was now on the brink of ruin.

Chapter 588: Aftermath Of The Incident

"Dim Dim, what do you think happened earlier?" Alex asked the Dim Sum God, whom he believed must know everything about Arcana.

Dim Dim shook its head. "Dim Dim."

Although he had expected it, Alex still sighed in his heart when he heard the little bun's confirmation.

Even the Dim Sum God was clueless about what prompted the situation earlier. It simply popped up without warning, and the aftermath stirred his club members into focusing more on their training.

Nessia and Renard were both frustrated about how easily they were taken down by the opponent's paralysis.

The young lady had even started imbuing increased resistance to status debuffs to accessories.

As for Renard, he had gone to the Exchange Center of the academy to look for skill manuals that would teach him how to raise his resistances to status debuffs.

For some reason, even Latifa, who rarely got out of bed, started going to the Training Rooms with Lotte and Lumi, training together.

Clearly, seeing her two future Alters appear before her and threaten her club members had upset her a lot.

Although no one blamed her, Latifa took this matter seriously. Even if those Alters didn't exactly belong to her, they were related to her from Reverse Arcana.

Vaan and Lapiz hadn't been around when it happened, but they heard about it through Chuck.

And seeing everyone train like they were preparing for war, the two decided to also focus on their own individual training.

Thanks to Dim Dim's intervention, the problem was fixed without escalating any further. After thinking about it, Alex deemed this incident a blessing in disguise.

The only downside was that Lavinia and Evangeline had also locked themselves inside the training rooms, though not before telling Alex they would be unreachable for a while.

'I guess this is for the best,' Alex thought before heaving another sigh. While he didn't want to admit it, knowing he also had a copy in Reverse Arcana made him feel complicated.

It was supposed to be a world where the Protagonists met with their counterparts, and they would either battle each other or teach each other something.

This would in turn make those in Arcana stronger, in preparation for stronger opponents that they would be facing in their second year in the academy.

Things accelerated a bit, and honestly, Alex believed that after that shock, everyone would strive to become stronger than ever.

'I'm a little anxious about what Nessia might do in the future,' Alex thought. 'I heard her muttering before she left the clubroom. Looks like she plans to spend her merit points to inscribe runic magic on the entire round table. That way, if Lala and Lulu were to appear again, they would get a shock.

Literally shocked from over a dozen lightning bolts shooting at them from point-blank range.

Honestly, Alex feared that Nessia would inscribe runes at the entirety of their clubroom just to prevent the disaster from repeating itself.

But the one most affected by this incident was Charles.

He had fought against strong people before. However, never in his life did he feel so powerless against someone.

Alex opened his map of the academy to check where everyone was located at the moment. To his surprise, Charles' marker was currently with Diona.

It seems that he had decided to consult her on how to get stronger. Since the Void-Touched were people who strived to overcome their weakness during their early stages, they knew more how to handle the skill, Challenger's Mark, more than anyone else in the world.

Alex had a Dungeon Core with him. He could give this to Charles to make the latter stronger. But he didn't do that.

It was not because he was selfish.

It was because he, himself, needed to be stronger.

Absorbing a Dungeon Core could raise the Rank of the one who absorbed it to the next level as long as the user's current rank was Rank 6 and below.

So getting the core and absorbing it after reaching Rank 6 was a shortcut that a few people had tried in the past.

Since absorbing a Dungeon Core absorption could only be done once in a lifetime, only those under Rank 6 and were desperate enough used it.

Alex had planned to absorb the core once he reached Rank 6, instantly boosting him to Rank 7.

It was a shortcut, and he believed that some people had also done it in the past.

For example... the members of the Void-Touched.

With Morax and a few other powerful members, it would not be difficult to raid a low-level dungeon.

In fact, he had a suspicion that Morax had at least a few Dungeon Cores in his possession, which he used for the sake of his members once they reached Rank 6.

Diona was a Rank 7 Beast Conqueror. If Alex guessed correctly, she might have reached that rank by absorbing a Dungeon Core with the help of the members of the Void-Touched.

Charles was now a Rank 4 Dungeon Conqueror.

If a fellow Void-Touched earnestly helped him power-level, he might become a Rank 6 before their second year.

Also, the more Dungeon Cores Charles absorbed... the more powerful he became. Even if Lulu's ability was overpowered, if she and Charles were of the same rank, the winner would be Charles for sure.

"Dim Dim, we need to get stronger too," Alex said in a serious tone.

Dim Dim nodded. "Dim!"

After his return trip from the Shadow Forest, Alex would finally celebrate his 18th Birthday.

Two months later, the Inter-Academy Tournaments would be held in the Kingdom of Faelarun.

That was also the place where the Second Trial of the Tower of the Hermit could be found.

He and his club members must visit that place no matter what. They would need the powerup that they could get from there, allowing them to become stronger than ever.

The first power up Alex gained was the Verdant Throne.

The second power, which he accidentally gained in the Whispering Valley, was the Gaia Ring.

After remembering the treasure chests he had been holding on for a while, Alex thought of Astrea who was still not in the academy.

According to her classmates, her father took her to an expedition somewhere within their domain.

It seems that they needed a bit of luck in their expedition, so the Duke decided to take his beloved daughter with him.

Alex didn't dare to open his treasure chests because he knew that he would just waste them.

'I hope she comes back after my return from the Shadow Forest,' Alex thought. 'I need all the luck I can get right now.'

The young man picked up the little bun, and placed it on top of his head. He was feeling a little depressed at the moment, so he decided to visit Fran and enjoy her cooking.

— — —

Somewhere in the Academy...

"So you've come, Charles." Diona smiled sweetly because this was the first time that Charles had actively sought her of his own volition after the incident back in Mistral Weave Forest.

"I want to know how you guys are able to control the power of the Void," Charles said. "Is there some kind of trick to it?"

"There is." Diona nodded. "As long as you're willing to learn, I am willing to teach you."

The Beast Conqueror wanted nothing more than to teach their future Dungeon Conqueror on how to use his powers properly.

Now that the young man had decided to seek her help, she would definitely teach him everything she knew. That way, Charles would be able to manifest his true powers, which would allow him to unlock his true potential, that had still not fully awakened inside of his body.

Chapter 589: Eve Of Departure

Everyone was still heavily affected by the incident from three days ago.

Nearly all the Endless Horizon members were still reeling from the shock.

Everyone was so busy training that the clock tower wasn't as crowded as it used to be. While this was happening, Alex was preparing for his journey with Fran to the Shadow Forest.

This time, Dim Dim decided to accompany them. It had witnessed the past, so it wished to pay tribute to the graves of the Heroes who had fought to save their friends till the better end.

Daisy and Rex also wanted to come along, but most airships didn't allow monsters onboard. Although it was regrettable, Dim Dim had to leave its friends behind for a while.

"I'm also going with you guys tomorrow," Finn said firmly as they were having lunch together.

Clearly, he wouldn't take no for an answer. Alex didn't mind having his future brother-in-law accompany them. In fact, he was looking forward to bonding with Finn.

Alex wasn't dense. He understood that Finn didn't like him. In the game, Finn hated anyone who tried to cozy up to his sister. In fact, Fran would only reach the end of her Happy Route if Finn and the Protagonist got along with each other.

If the Protagonist failed to befriend Finn before Fran's route was completed, she would encounter a Bad Ending.

Alex wanted to prevent this outcome no matter what.

"I'd be happy to have you along, Finn," Alex replied before Fran could even say anything.

"Hmph..." Finn clicked his tongue before he continued to eat.

Fran felt rather helpless about her brother's attitude towards Alex. But Alex had told her to leave it to him. He had promised that he would do his best to get along with Finn so that their relationship wouldn't be too strained in the future.

Later that evening, Evangeline went to look for Alex, wanting to drink his blood. He hadn't seen much of her recently as she had been practicing diligently every day and sparring with Eleanora in the training room.

But this time, Evangeline wanted to be spoiled because she wouldn't be able to see Alex for a few days since he would be at the Shadow Forest.

After an hour of hugs and kisses, Alex finally left the Old Library.

This time, Lumi appeared and dragged him to the clock tower.

There, he spent two hours "fluffing" the three fox girls, who also wanted to be spoiled since they had been training hard as well.

When he returned to the dormitory, he found that Lavinia was also there and waiting for him in the common room.

She had asked Chuck to give Alex and her some privacy because Alex would be gone for a while.

Naturally, Chuck was more than happy to become the wingman of his best friend.

What he wasn't happy about was that Mary came to drag him to the Vermillion Crest Dormitory meant for Noble students.

Princess Xenia wanted to talk to him about something important, so she had sent Mary to drag him to her.

She trusted her maid's strength and believed Chuck wouldn't be able to escape from Mary no matter how hard he tried.

Dim Dim was also very understanding, so it decided to stay behind. It allowed itself to be pampered, kissed, hugged, and cuddled in the common room by the ladies who found its cuteness irresistible.

"Have you finished packing?" Lavinia asked.

"Yes," Alex replied. "I'm not bringing much on the trip."

The two sat on top of Alex's bed and hugged each other. She could smell Evangeline's, Latifa's, Lumi's and Lotte's fragrances on the young man's body.

But she understood that, just like her, they also wanted to bid him a proper goodbye before he left in the morning.

Lavinia had been especially bold as of late after getting the approval of her family. In fact, her grandfather was already making plans for her to marry Alex after their graduation.

"Is the Shadow Forest dangerous?" Lavinia asked. "It's located between the borders of the Kingdom of Faelarun and Solara, right?"

"I don't think it will be dangerous," Alex replied. "Also, I no longer have to worry about Professor Diona trying to kill me. We made peace with each other. Right now, all of her attention is focused on training Charles."

"At least that's one less worry."

"Mmm."

Alex was more than happy to get Diona off his back. He wanted to have a good relationship with the members of the Void-Touched because he believed that he would need their help in the future.

“Alex, there’s something that I wanted to ask you,” Lavinia said seriously. “I could see how shocked you were when Lulu and Lala appeared. But for some reason, I felt like you were already familiar with them. Am I just over thinking things?”

“You’re not,” Alex admitted. “I know Lala and Lulu. Well, that was my first time seeing them in the flesh, but I had already seen them in my dreams.”

Alex had already mentioned that he was a Seer. This was his way of making sure that people wouldn’t be too suspicious of him in the future.

It also helped him escape tricky questions that would make his life complicated.

“Will... will that portal open again in the clubroom?” Lavinia asked. “Nessia has been inscribing runes on the round table with puffy red eyes. It seems that she’s out for blood.”

“Well, I can’t blame her.” Alex sighed.

Nessia had been forced to witness Charles getting hurt in front of her. Despite struggling to break free, Lala’s paralysis was simply too strong for Nessia to even move a finger. Now that helplessness was driving her.

She was the type of Heroine that needed time to prepare for any battles. That was how her ability worked.

However, once she was given time to create Runic Formations, her fighting prowess drastically increased.

With this incident, Nessia had started inscribing runes on her accessories, clothes, and other equipment.

This allowed her to be battle-ready at any given time. If there was a silver lining to that incident, it allowed Nessia to truly understand that she should be prepared at all times.

“You still didn’t answer my question,” Lavinia pressed with a pout. “Will that portal open again in the clubroom? It seems that everyone is feeling anxious because of that possibility.”

The most anxious ones were Latifa, Lotte, and Lumi because they had already treated the clock tower as their residence.

Although Alex doubted that Lulu and Lala would hurt Latifa, the possibility still existed.

“I don’t know if it will open again before this year ends,” Alex admitted. “But I do know that it will open during our Second Year. We might even have to cross to Reverse Arcana at that point in time.”

“You call it Reverse Arcana,” Lavinia said as she held Alex’s gaze. “And you explained to us that the people who lived there are the complete opposite of us. Does that mean that I will also find my other half there?”

“Maybe,” Alex replied. “I don’t really know. But I do hope that you meet her. Whether as friends or as enemies, you will definitely learn something from her.”

Lavinia was also curious what her other half would be like. Was she also in love with Alex like she was?

Lulu and Lala seemed to have feelings for Alex due to the way they treated him when they arrived.

She just hoped that her version in Reverse Arcana got along well with Alex. Maybe their counterparts were also close enough to be in a relationship with each other!

Chapter 590: A Place Of Memories And Tears [Part 1]

“Hmmm~” “Hmmm~”

“Hmmm~” “Hmmm~”

Dim Dim hummed happily while perched on top of one of the airship’s massive sails. The view was so breathtaking that it didn’t mind waiting for the other passengers to board.

Alex couldn't help but smile at the sight of the little bun in a good mood. It had slept early yesterday like a diligent student about to go on their first field trip.

Fran also noticed the little bun's chirpiness, making her smile.

The only one who wasn't in a good mood was Finn, who had his arms crossed over his chest. He was staring at the City of Harmonia as if it owed him money.

Nearly half an hour later, the horn of the airship finally sounded, signaling to everyone that they would soon depart.

Dim Dim remained on top of the sails, and even wore a white pirate hat. Thinking its get up wasn't enough, it decided to add an eye patch to play the part well.

"Yaar!" Dim Dim shouted as the airship slowly rose to the sky.

They were heading to the Shadow Forest, which marked the border separating the Kingdoms of Solara and Faelaru.

The place where a great battle had ended in the defeat of the Demon King by the Unsung Heroes, whom the world never knew about.

Alex reached out to hold Fran's head, making the latter smile faintly. Truth be told, both of them felt slightly anxious.

They didn't know if the graves were still there or had been destroyed by the passing of time.

"It will be fine," Alex said before giving the young lady's hand a light squeeze. "We'll find them for sure."

"Un." Fran nodded, leaning close to Alex.

This journey would last for sixteen hours because the airship would be making several stopovers.

Alex had paid for two rooms. Fran and Finn would share one room, while he and Dim Dim would share the other.

He didn't dare to stay in the same room with Fran while Finn was around. It was a recipe for disaster, so he decided to play it safe. He didn't want his future brother-in-law's impression of him to deteriorate any further!

After an hour of playing pirate, Dim Dim descended to the deck and jumped on Alex's head.

The children who saw the little bun's cute pirate get-up approached Alex and asked if they could play with Dim Dim.

"Hey, what's your name?" A little girl asked.

"Dim Dim!"

"Let's play!" a boy proposed.

"Dim!"

Dim Dim was more than happy to oblige, and the children had fun with their little Dim Sum Pirate friend.

Several hours later, the sun was finally about to set.

Everyone watched the sunset because seeing it from an airship was quite different from seeing it on land.

When this romantic setting ended, they went to have dinner together. The meals on the airship were simple but tasty.

Bread and stew.

The stew was thick, hearty, and filled with chunks of meat. Dim Dim liked it, but it also brought out a few bamboo steamers filled with Dim Sum that Fran and Finn really enjoyed.

Finn didn't dislike Dim Dim. The bun was kind, respectful, and very friendly.

The two of them often talked whenever Dim Dim visited the farm to play with Daisy, Rex, and Captain.

Alex ate in silence, feeling a little pressured because Finn would glance at him from time to time.

Fran sat beside her brother. She would look at Alex then her brother then back again at Alex.

The only thing she could do was smile wryly while sighing in her heart.

She really hoped that the two most important people in her life would get along a little better during this trip. If that could happen, she would be content.

While they had booked rooms, they would not be staying overnight. They would arrive at their destination by midnight, so they only went there to rest for a bit.

Finally, the Captain made an announcement, telling everyone that they were now about to land on the Town of Ambertrail.

"It's time to go, are you ready Dim Dim?" Alex asked.

"Ahem!" Dim Dim raised its body proudly as if telling its partner that it was born ready.

They then regrouped up with Fran and Finn as they waited for the airship to descend at their destination.

They didn't bother to go to find an inn and left the city in the darkness of the night.

Instead of renting a carriage, the group decided to run for a bit of exercise.

Also, they would be traversing a mountain and a forest, so a carriage wouldn't help them.

Fran and Finn were physically fit and they were very good runners. Alex, on the other hand, wasn't as fit as them. But he had his magical shields that he could use as a means of transport if needed.

The journey wasn't as smooth as the one they had in the airship. Several monsters like goblins, ogres, wolves, and trolls roamed the land that they traveled on.

But since they were strong enough to overpower the monsters they faced, these encounters simply turned into Alex gaining some experience points along the way.

Several hours later, they finally arrived at the entrance of the Shadow Forest.

"Let's take a break," Alex said before wiping the sweat on his forehead. The cool night breeze had helped him feel better, but the trip still took a toll on his body.

Thinking that Finn might be offended if he rode a shield while the two dwarfs were running, Alex endured with Dim Dim cheering him on.

"Okay." Fran took out a handkerchief and helped wipe Alex's face when he sat down to rest.

She also wiped Dim Dim's face because the little bun asked to be spoiled as well. Though there was nothing to wipe since it hadn't left Alex's head during their journey.

Since they were already resting, and the sun would be rising soon, Alex proposed that they have breakfast.

“I’ll do the cooking,” Fran said. “You just rest.”

“Thank you,” Alex replied.

Fran knew that the young man had pushed himself too hard. She even advised him to drink a healing and stamina potion to help relieve muscle and joint pains and recover his energy.

Alex didn’t play it tough and followed her advice. After drinking the potions one after another, he felt better instantly.

He then watched as Finn helped his sister prepare the campfire and assisted her in cooking their breakfast.

A glance was enough to tell him that the two of them were used to camping outside. Since he had nothing to do, Alex opened his map to check if he could see anything that would help him find the location of the graves.

But the map didn’t show him any landmarks. Instead, it showed him the location of monsters, including three Rank 6 Field Boss Monsters, who had claimed the Shadow Forest as their own.