

Void 1101

Chapter 1101 Lunar River [3]

The greatest achievement Damien had made on his own in the Severed World was his first meditation session.

Back then, when he was desperately trying to maintain his memory, he'd shattered a portion of the sub-universe's restriction, which made a certain force available to him again.

The Void showed itself when he used Devour.

The Breath of Nothingness that remained hidden until now came out in full force, consuming Damien's target with all its power.

What was that target?

Naturally, it was Sia's comprehension.

If he couldn't attain it himself, he could just steal it!

This was the split-second decision he came to upon realizing the limits of his strength.

To steal someone else's comprehension was usually impossible without injuring them. After all, it was essentially crippling their strength, ridding them of any memory of those comprehensions.

But it was different in the Severed World.

Here, the comprehension one had was, in simple terms, held in a backup.

The restriction was able to read one's past and revert their strength, which meant it needed to keep a memory of what to return to them when they left.

In that instance, one's original strength would be added back onto what they gained in the Severed World, and any "superfluous data" would naturally override itself.

Basically, the comprehensions one maintained from their original 2nd class state would be returned, while things they achieved within the realm would be maintained.

Damien didn't know anything about Sia, but he could guarantee that her comprehension didn't come from this realm.

If she only recently understood her laws, she wouldn't be able to use them with such precision and subtlety.

Truthfully, Damien had been testing Sia for a while.

She didn't act unless she needed to, but whenever he gave her a task, she was able to accomplish it perfectly.

For instance, when she placed a target on the Wind Spirit King's back.

That precise mana control was already impressive, but when her unique law was taken into account, all the facts showed that she was an expert in the outside world.

Even if Damien harmed her comprehension right now, nothing would happen to her in the long run.

'But at the end of the day, we're on good terms, so I'll have to make sure something like that doesn't happen.'

It was just a matter of control.

Damien was very careful in handling the Breath of Nothingness with his current strength, and though he couldn't sense where Sia was, he made sure not to send his mana past the bounds of the wisps she left for him.

'I can start with these to get a feel for it and then get bolder later. Since she released these into reality, they must be low-level comprehensions.'

Giving him high-level material from the start was foolish. He didn't believe Sia would make such a scammer-like move.

The Breath of Nothingness did its job perfectly when it was given the opportunity. The wisps of strange mana were swallowed one after another, and several thoughts filled Damien's mind, colliding and merging as if they had physical presence.

'This law...isn't quite Universal Law...?'

He didn't expect it to be so easy to grasp when it was presented like this.

He rapidly understood what the nature of Sia's law was.

'Just like the Severed World, she holds an incomplete Universal Law in her hands.'

Its rules were different and it had developed in a direction fit for an individual rather than a plane, but it was undoubtedly a partial universal law.

'Did she come here for the same purpose as me? To steal the Severed World's achievements for herself?'

If so, she was definitely impressive. Rather than doing the work herself, she came to this point utilizing the strength of others and using every waking moment to study the realm's laws!

The dedication was admirable.

'And it's my ticket to success!'

Damien was now in an amazing position.

Sia's incomplete law was entering his head piece by piece through the Breath of Nothingness, while the Severed World's incomplete law was displayed above for him to read whenever he desired!

The only problem was time.

'Khh...!'

Damien gritted his teeth as he felt something entering his body.

Tendrils of the Severed World's will entered his body through the Lunar River's water, gripping his heart and giving him a severe warning.

It was fine to learn what he wanted, but only within the bounds of what he was allowed.

This was the message it sent!

'It's fucking annoying. The damn universe started attacking me the moment I went under. Aren't your bounds a little too strict?'

Damien frowned, but he knew in his heart that he didn't have the power to refute,

'I have at most a minute in here. I have to take everything I can in the time I have.'

Damien once again stopped his idle thoughts and concentrated.

His mana spread past the tiny wisps of cosmic mana and towards where he assumed their source was.

He swirled his mana around the river, even devouring some of its waters, but he was never able to touch Sia's physical body.

Nevertheless, the fluctuations of cosmic mana became denser the further he traveled into its midst, and the comprehension he received wasn't slight at all.

The situation continued for precisely a minute.

Damien constantly compared the laws above him with those in his head, forming a more complete picture of how these two entities understood Universal Law.

But that wasn't enough for him.

The information he was currently receiving was extremely helpful, but he wanted to seek the truth!

He wanted to test the True Universal Law itself!

Splash!

"Fuwah!"

His head resurfaced from the deep blackness, the water dripping down his face illuminated by the pale white light from below.

'I guess that's all I can do for now.'

He had to be satisfied with what he had.

He climbed out of the river and used mana to dry his body, glancing around in the meantime.

"Huh..." he muttered awkwardly,

"...I guess I'm the first one out."

He didn't look down on the girls, but this was the first time such a situation occurred, not just with them, but in general.

"..."

Damien sat down, a look of confusion on his face.

"...what am I supposed to do now?"

For once, he was put in the waiting room, forced to entertain himself until the test finished.

But how did he do that here?

He could just relax, but he had enough of that in the Blessing Shrine's blank space.

His eyes turned to the other side of the riverbank.

'Should I go feel out the competition?'

It was a known fact that the beasts higher up would be incredibly powerful. Preparations to deal with their strength had already been made.

Their number was still a problem, though.

If there were too many of them, preparation became meaningless.

Damien stood up and stretched his body, flickering as he teleported across the river.

'It's already been a minute, but it's rare for normal practitioners to last even 30 seconds in there. I'm on a time crunch.'

Sure he was doing something important, but he had to be back before the girls emerged from the river.

After all, he knew it personally.

The feeling of seeing someone one cared about patiently waiting for them to finish was too heartwarming for him to deny his women that privilege!

Chapter 1102 Lunar River [4]

Splash!

Splash!

Splash!

Three people surfaced from the water at the same time, taking deep breaths and stabilizing their minds.

Rose, Ruyue, and Elena completed their time in the Lunar River after five minutes. It was an astounding amount of time when compared to the average.

Still, this time came with consequences.

It took them several moments to reorient themselves.

After all, they also saw the Severed World's Universal Law.

Damien could only handle it because he was familiar with the concept. When the girls were shown the same sight, their spiritual worlds were shaken terrifically.

It made sense why people were crippled. Even they were almost crippled in the first few seconds.

The pressure of the grand truth influenced their minds almost to the point of breaking them, but they'd managed to survive.

Their gains were matched by an equal amount of disorientation that made them unable to distinguish whether reality was truly real or not.

Whoosh!

A light wind blew past their faces, and a calming flow of mana surrounded them, warming their bodies.

Their eyes opened slowly as their minds cleared, and Damien's figure was the first thing they saw.

He smiled warmly and looked between them.

"How was it?" He asked.

The girls smiled back happily and took his help to pull themselves out of the river.

"It was great. That woman really has a habit of downplaying these areas," Ruyue said first.

"I didn't expect to make so much progress on a path I just discovered. This place is really spectacular," Rose added.

Elena nodded as well.

Damien's gains couldn't be used as a basis for what one could do in the Lunar River.

It was his fault for attempting to grasp the most extreme possible concept he could.

For these three women who focused on what they were best at and tried diligently to move themselves towards Divinity, the results were marvelous.

Ruyue and Elena were already at a point where they nearly embodied their elements, but this effect was even more pronounced now.

And Rose...well, Rose's achievement was more subtle, but the connotations were far greater than anyone could imagine.

'Zara is still in my shadow and Isla went back into Elena's companion space, so the only one left is...'

Her body silently arrived at the riverside as Damien had the thought, and she calmly stepped out, already dry.

"This is the end of our cooperation," Sia said, not wasting a single second.

Damien smiled wryly.

"I don't know why you'd hire us if you're so happy to get away from us, but it is what it is," he responded with a shrug.

Sia glanced at him expressionlessly before shaking her head.

"It was a pleasant experience. I would not have made such progress with such efficiency if not for your aid."

"Yeah, yeah. Your flattery skill is just as interesting as your laws. I'm almost curious about who you are outside of this place."

"After taking so much from me, you're still curious?"

"Please watch your phrasing. I'm a married man, you know?"

"Yes, I think it's quite obvious."

Damien grinned slightly.

It was the most interaction they'd had since they met, so he was a bit surprised by her willingness to talk.

"Well, I guess we both got what we wanted, so I'll call this a successful cooperation as well," he said, reaching his hand out.

Sia glanced at it and frowned slightly, turning away without shaking it.

"There are only 3 opponents remaining, but each of them has extreme strength. Do not disappoint me and die in your journey."

With those words, she vanished entirely, as if she never existed in the first place.

She came and went like a passing wind, and her presence held the same fragility, yet, the vagueness of her existence only made her more interesting.

It was a brief interaction that was almost nonexistent in the hearts of those who experienced it, but for some reason, it managed to find a small place for itself.

Just like that strange woman named Sia.

Damien turned to the girls and smiled.

"I guess she actually did care about us."

"Us? Or you?" Elena asked suspiciously.

"Um...us, probably?"

"Pfft...!"

Rose suppressed a giggle and rolled her eyes.

"It's never us and you know it."

Damien shook his head in defeat.

At least in this situation, he could be sure that wasn't the case.

Plus, he was a loyal man!

I'm suddenly remembering Rose's claim from all those years ago that I could have eight wives...'

He shuddered at the thought.

'...being young was nice. Now that I've experienced it, I'd definitely die if I had eight women.'

The group continued bantering, with Damien doing his best to divert the topic, as they started their journey up the mountain.

As Sia said, there were three beasts remaining.

Damien already went and checked each one of them, assessing the best course of action.

And truthfully...there wasn't one.

The Thunder Demon Crow, the Imperious Flame Eagle, and the Pegasus.

Every single one of them had the strength of a 4th class being, and while two of them were defined by their elements, unlike the lesser beasts of the realm, they'd managed to understand the importance of these traits.

'The Severed World's Universal Law edges closer to completeness from this point forth. It's almost as if...'

Damien's eyes narrowed.

'...I'm looking forward to our meeting.'

Refocusing on the current situation, he told the girls what he knew about their coming opponents so they could choose which one to fight first.

Regardless, they'd have to pass through the territory of one of these beasts.

The next 200 kilometers of the mountain's height was divided horizontally rather than vertically.

The three kings lived on three different sides of the peak, occupying equal space.

'The problem is that Sia said we still have 3 to face. It won't be as easy as it looks.'

The Pegasus was not an option from the start.

Its power was too mysterious, and since it came down to start the Ascension Ceremony, its relationship with the Cloud Emperor couldn't be shallow.

From the other two, the choices were flames and lightning, two of the most popular elements in the universe.

"If we have to pick between the two, the answer is obviously flames."

At least Ruyue had an elemental advantage against the eagle. Against the raven, their group would only find pain!

"But can we even do it? That's a 4th class being. Even if we were the best geniuses in the universe, taking down a 4th class at 2nd class would be impossible," Rose said.

It was an undeniable truth that they were in over their heads...

...or was it?

Damien grinned.

"Don't worry about it. We have to pass through its territory to reach the peak, but who said we had to fight it?" He said.

The girls made expressions of confusion, making his grin widen.

"Haha, let's just say that we have a lot more options than we used to."

5 minutes was a long time.

While the girls stayed in the Lunar River, a genuinely insane plan came to Damien's mind.

'I really don't try to make enemies, but...'

...once again, he was going to make the Severed World very, very angry.

Chapter 1103 Lightning [1]

The Imperious Flame Eagle's true size was unknown, but the gait it maintained was similar in size to a one-story building.

It had a huge wingspan, and like the Sword Hawk had blade-like feathers, each of this bird's feathers was laced with flames.

Its pure existence was enough to heat up the atmosphere, and the fluctuations of its element raged chaotically around its body, a condition caused by the incomplete world laws.

It sat perched in its nest, not quite in the center of its territory but not far away from it, and got ready to spend another peaceful day.

Challengers rarely came to this part of the mountain. Those who did were usually far too weak, and only fought him because they underestimated his power.

Therefore, it had been a quiet life since the creature earned its place at the top of the mountain.

Still, it wasn't the strongest.

Both it and the Thunder Demon Crow became kings through the Ascension Ceremony, but the Pegasus had existed for as long as the mountain.

It subtly oppressed the two of them, making sure they knew they would never match up to it or the Cloud Emperor it served.

There wasn't much to do as a ruler in this place, so the Imperious Flame Eagle spent most of its time understanding the flames that surfaced on its body when it reached 4th class.

However, today was once again a day of challenge.

He felt the presence of outsiders in his territory.

Haa...

He sighed to himself and flapped his wings, shooting into the air.

His expansive shadow tracked along the ground, putting fear into the hearts of the animals living in this territory.

Even from far away, this shadow was visible.

Damien and the girls had only just entered the area, but they already saw the visage of its lord moving in their direction.

Damien's eyes narrowed.

"There's only one thing you need to remember," he said to the girls.

"No matter what happens, don't stop running."

They nodded in response, their expressions hardening.

It was clear that the moment of battle was approaching.

And it wasn't going to give them any more time to prepare!

WHOOSH!

Furious winds kicked through the air as the Imperious Flame Eagle arrived above the group.

It looked down on them like ants. Without a single word of greeting, it flapped its wings again, sending a rain of flaming feathers to the ground!

"Damn!"

Damien exclaimed and picked up the pace, making sure the girls were following him.

He grabbed Freya and fired a single shot into the air, perfectly aimed at one of the feathers.

Bang!

The feather exploded into a fiery wave that consumed those around it and burned the air.

"It's just a probe! Get out of range and make a break for the peak!"

Damien slammed his feet into the ground, skidding to a stop and facing the eagle.

Mirage appeared in his grip and he slashed it without mercy, sending hundreds of crescent-shaped spatial ruptures into the sky.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

Feathers continued to explode and the atmosphere was instantly filled with chaotic waves of battle.

The girls followed Damien's instructions and continued running without waiting for him.

If there was one thing Damien excelled at, it was running away!

Damien kept using Freya and Mirage to block the Imperious Flame Eagle's projectiles, watching it seriously.

'It's not changing its attack patterns? Is it looking down on me that much?'

Well, it wasn't unwarranted considering the strength difference, but Damien still didn't appreciate it!

'It looks like they're out of range. Let's get started.'

The girls were moving with haste and cleared several dozen kilometers in just a few seconds, which gave Damien space to enact his insane plan!

He jumped into the air and teleported, flashing higher and higher until he was at the same altitude as the eagle.

The beast looked at him with a spark of anger in its eyes, and he grinned in response.

"Now!"

He flicked his arm out. A vortex of pitch-black mana appeared before him.

He felt a certain connection that remained restricted until now opening up due to the influence of Void Mana, and...!

Haaa!

A fierce battle cry rang through the air.

A green blur split sound itself and approached the Imperious Flame Eagle in a single instant.

BOOM!

The blur's fist slammed into its head with the crushing power of a 4th class being.

And it's figure became visible at the same time.

It was none other than Elvira, who'd come to assist from the Sanctuary!

"Elvira, there's no time! Do as much damage as possible!" Damien yelled.

"Understood!" She responded, chasing the eagle she'd just thrown.

B-BOOM!

The sky clouded over instantaneously.

Damien gaining access to the Void meant he could force open the pathway to the Sanctuary, which was maintained by the Void itself.

Since those he summoned didn't enter the Severed World naturally, the sub-universe's restrictions couldn't be applied to them!

However, the Severed World wouldn't just accept their existence.

If it couldn't be controlled, it had to be eradicated!

Elvira pushed through the air, controlling her mana to bring massive vines bursting out of the ground.

They entwined around the Imperious Flame Eagle, and just as she moved to attack—

"Time to go!"

Damien swept his arm out and wrapped her in his mana, sending her back to the Sanctuary.

KABOOOOOOOM!

A tree-trunk-like bolt of lightning fell from the clouds and obliterated the space it tore through, striking down on Elvira's past location!

The Imperious Flame Eagle was just unfortunate enough to get caught in the blast radius.

CAAAYWWW!

It croaked in absolute anguish.

It was only hit by the residue of the lightning, but that was still lightning strong enough to incinerate a 4th class being!

Damien grinned to himself.

'As expected, it works!'

Damien flicked his hand out again and repeated the process.

"Lucius!"

The Demon Emperor appeared in reality and used his shadow-like abilities to stab tendrils of darkness into the eagle's body.

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

A bolt of lightning struck once more, much faster than the last.

Damien was barely able to bring the man back to the Sanctuary before it hit!

'The world really isn't happy...but, I need to do a lot more than this if I want to kill it.'

Damien's face turned solemn, his mind reaching pinpoint focus.

He had to react faster than the world laws no matter what!

"White Dragon King!"

"Haha, you're still a crazy brat!"

The White Dragon King came third and by this point, Elvira and Lucius already filled the rest in on the exact situation, something Damien forgot to do.

Since he came prepared, Bai Longxuan had his 4th-class aura hidden as he moved.

He didn't attack like the previous two, but instead let his entire draconic aura loose once he was in range of the bird!

ROOOOOAAAAAAAAR!

A guttural dragon roar reverberated through space. The pressure of a pure dragon bloodline crashed down on the eagle, forcing it into the ground!

Once again, lightning fell from the sky as Damien transported his helper to safety.

Once again, the Imperious Flame Eagle was struck!

The strategy was utter insanity that risked the lives of Damien and every subordinate he called...

...but for the sake of the mission, it had to be done!

Chapter 1104 Lightning [2]

Currently, the Imperious Flame Eagle was feeling more aggrieved than it had ever been.

What did it do wrong?

No, what the hell was even happening right now?

Strange beings kept appearing from thin air and attacking him, and what was worse, nature seemed to have become his enemy as well!

He'd been struck with all kinds of elements from water to darkness, from life to death. He'd been stabbed, hacked, and beaten with every possible weapon imaginable, even fists!

Bai Longxuan was followed by Feng Yuxiang and Bianca Snow. They were followed by Tephit and Galantis.

Each of these individuals had reached the 9 revolutions already, but they weren't the only 4th class beings under Damien's control!

Lunaria Snow and Feng Qing'er were both nearing the middle stages of 4th class and showed their faces to help, the elite corps Damien ordered Elvira to train was filled with 4th class soldiers he could utilize, the Cloud Giants and undersea races had their own 4th class forces...

Damien finally let loose the force of the Sanctuary that he'd kept hidden for so long.

And even now, he was only revealing a portion of it.

If he took those below 4th class into account...

Hell, even if he took the 4th class beings too weak to use in this battle into account, his force became something terrifying!

It could be said that Damien had his own Holy Land in the Sanctuary. That was the kind of force he'd been hiding.

'It'll be a bit longer before I can bring them into the universe full-force, but for now, it's great to see how the Sanctuary has grown.'

Damien happily reveled in the achievements of himself and his underlings as he tormented the Imperious Flame Eagle, which still hadn't been able to approach him!

After the assault of so many 4th class beings along with the Heavenly Lightning that unintentionally struck him every time, he was already nearing the verge of death after a few minutes.

Its flaming wings were clipped, there were scorch marks all over its body, and gashes and holes caused by its living enemies rained blood onto the ground below!

It couldn't even move anymore.

It tried to attack, but the summoning nature of these enemies' presence made it impossible for him to guess where they came from.

And if it attacked Damien...

Well, did it need to be said?

Teleportation made him a ghost that couldn't be touched.

He was a dignified king.

He was someone who surpassed all other beasts in the Severed World to achieve his position.

He was a beast among beasts, a powerhouse that was feared by all!

Yet, in his own territory, it was being beaten like a pig.

The Imperious Flame Eagle was unresigned to its fate, but what could it do?!

Damien's seemingly endless supply of single-use 4th-class beings would otherwise be manageable.

The Heavenly Lightning was the true instigator of its fate.

If it wasn't for that lightning, it wouldn't have lost the ability to fight back so easily!

If not for the lightning, it wouldn't have lost its wings!

A bird without its wings was nothing but prey.

This fact didn't change when talking about powerful creatures.

Damien descended onto the eagle's head as it pitifully bled out, his eyes focused on the storm above.

"I think something worse is coming for me, so I'll let you off easy this time," he said, withdrawing Mirage.

Shik!

The sword stabbed in between the bird's eyes, slicing straight through its broken skull and impaling its brain.

He wasn't supposed to kill this king, because his challenge was yet to end.

But he had no choice.

He was about to pass out from the mental fatigue of his heavy concentration and battle against the Universal Law.

Right now, he required sustenance.

'Devour'

Damien let the pitch-black maw of mana chomp into the eagle's body and consume it.

He felt his own body changing due to it, and he felt its memories streaming into his head.

'No, this isn't what I need right now.'

The power of a 4th class being could do wonders for his current 2nd-class self, but its influence would be minuscule in the long run.

Therefore, Damien saved its essence and disallowed it from sinking into his body.

He once again turned his attention to the sky.

"Thanks for waiting. Let's get this over with."

Rumble!

The clouds thundered as if responding to his words.

As the perpetrator of the offenses that called this storm and angered the Heavens in the first place, Damien couldn't escape its punishment.

Lightning coiled in the sky, sparking as it combined into a single bolt that rested in the center of the thundercloud.

The bolt was more like a pillar at this point, sitting in the sky and waiting for its chance to descend.

It waited for Damien to see it and feel its power, so it could strike fear into his heart.

But fear had no place in his life.

"If you want to come, then come! I'm too busy to play your little games!"

RUMBLE!

The clouds roared angrily and responded to his provocation.

In a single instant, a 5-meter-wide pillar of lightning descended to the ground below.

The world seemed to go dark.

From every corner of the mountain, one could see this lightning pillar and feel the world's hatred.

Rose, Ruyue, and Elena looked back at the area with worried expressions on their faces.

"He'll...be fine, right?" Elena muttered.

It was quiet for a second.

"He'll be fine," Rose responded firmly.

"His strength might be weakened, but don't you know our husband by now? He is not someone who'll die so easily."

Elena nodded.

The spectacular fluctuations emanating from the point of impact were rushing through the air in pulses.

It felt like a rushing wind made of mana, a scenario none of them had ever experienced even in their wildest moments.

Because this kind of phenomenon could only be manifested by an entity at the level of a partial Universal Law.

Far, far away from the girls, on the other side of the mountain, a woman watched the event with indifference in her eyes.

Her expression didn't change, but her thoughts were running wild.

'I knew it. This man...'

She suddenly remembered a certain moment and shook her head.

'I can't. I cannot.'

Closing her eyes, Sia stabilized her mind and patted the being beside her.

"Go. That one will probably head over soon. Your help is needed."

"Hmph."

The being snorted proudly.

"My master has the same desire. You do not need to command me."

"Since when did I command you? Plus, don't I count for anything?"

"You are...a special case."

"See? So just be obedient and head over."

The being frowned and shook its head.

Despite her strange methods, she'd still managed to come here, so it didn't have the choice to go against her.

Its wings flapped gracefully and it took to the air.

"Let us see if it is worth the effort."

Sia was left alone as the being left in the direction of the Heavenly Lightning beam.

Countless eyes were focused on the scene Damien had made.

Such pure wrath couldn't be elicited from an unbiased entity like the Universal Law, after all.

They were curious about why it reacted in such a way, and what could possibly cause it.

Their questions would likely never be answered.

And the man at the center of their confusion...

Chapter 1105 Lightning [3]

"AHHHHHH!"

Damien's scream was contained within the pillar of lightning striking down on his body, unable to escape.

Yet, the agony he felt was very real.

Getting hit by a pillar of Heavenly Lightning naturally had the effects one would expect it to have.

The only thing in Damien's heart and mind was pain, and no matter what he tried, he could do nothing but endure.

The Imperious Flame Eagle's essence formed a film around him and protected him from a large portion of the lightning's effects, which was why he wasn't burned to a crisp already.

But it didn't seem like his torture would end any time soon.

And the worst part...

'What a petty Universal Law!'

Despite being entrenched in its fluctuations, Damien couldn't feel an ounce of the Universal Law.

This attack had the potential to be a massive blessing that made his pain worth it, but the Severed World wasn't so kind.

It hid the truths of its law behind barriers upon barriers of lightning and formless protection.

Damien's perception was trapped within a certain region and unable to trace those hidden truths, and he was in far too much pain to consciously summon the Void to assist him!

The current form his body held was still powerful, but his physical defense was far too weak to handle an attack of this scale.

His regeneration was also stalled and [Heal] was unavailable, so enduring silently and internalizing the pain was impossible.

'When...will...this...end?!'

To keep his mind stable, Damien counted every second he spent in torment. More than a minute passed already, yet the Heavenly Lightning showed no signs of dispersing.

Absolute anguish spread through his nervous system.

The lightning was laced with the world's intent. It didn't merely strike his physical body and attempt to end him, no, it made sure he knew he was being punished!

The only defenses he currently had were the Imperious Flame Eagle's essence and his own flimsy 2nd class mana.

These two layers dispersed and diverted the power of the heavens, and with the last shred of consciousness remaining in his mind, he manipulated his mana to use Vector Control as much as he possibly could.

'Pain is power. Pain is power. Pain is—'

"KHHHH...!"

Damien gritted his teeth and repeated his motto over and over again in his mind.

All he had to do was stay alive.

The world was angry, but it was also unbiased.

Damien's subordinates who illegally entered the realm were targeted with lethal power, but Damien himself still had a way out.

Because not only did he enter and accept the realm's restrictions, but he didn't break the rules with his actions.

After all, the power he was able to utilize in here was power he gained here. The previous shattering of the Void's prison was done without abusing loopholes, so the actions he took using his newly gained abilities were also not restricted.

Still, he assisted others in breaking the rules, so he needed to be put in his place.

If he died, it was his fault for being too arrogant!

He knew this in his heart and held on with every ounce of power he could utilize.

With the passing of time, as he got more acclimated to the pain, he was able to use his lucidity to increase his defense, which thereby reduced the pain he felt.

5 minutes.

It took an entire 5 minutes before the Heavenly Lightning Pillar started to reduce in size until it completely vanished.

The storm above also disappeared in a flash, as if it never existed.

Thud!

Damien's body fell to the ground limply, his skin charred in many places and his eyes unfocused.

"Haa...haa...haa..."

He took in the fresh air around him and gradually brought his mind back to reality.

However...

'Fuck, I can't move.'

There were still strands of lightning coursing through his nerves. He was unable to control his body or even summon his mana.

'Transcendent Regeneration is doing this job, but I guess I'll be stuck here for the next...two or so minutes?'

"Heh..."

He smirked, or at least he tried to, with an expression of pride shining in his eyes.

'I survived a direct attack from the Heavenly Law. How many people can say that?'

It wasn't his first time doing it, but every time was an unprecedented achievement.

It wasn't wrong for him to feel proud.

Only, the current situation was not the ideal place to drop one's guard.

Whoosh!

A light wind brushed against Damien's face, and a large shadow shaded him from the sunlight cascading down from above.

Damien's strange smirk-like expression lost its joy in an instant.

'Ah...fuck.'

Standing over him was none other than the Thunder Demon Crow with a strange glint in its eyes.

"Khh...hey, if you want to fight, wait a bit. I'm a little incapacitated right now..."

Damien used mana to transmit his voice, putting just a slight bit of faith in the challenge system this mountain held.

But of course, it was false hope at best.

"Now that you have killed Haka, you are a new King. There is no rule that restricts fighting between Kings."

Damien smiled wryly.

'Worst case scenario, I get hit by more Heavenly Lightning...that's a worst case scenario I really don't want to experience...'

Was there no other choice?

He knew the girls were probably somewhere nearby, but he didn't want them to get involved with this.

After all, the foe was a 4th class being!

Damien looked into the raven's eyes as it raised its claw into the air.

'I guess I'm going to experience what it feels like to be eaten alive—'

Damien's eyes widened.

A figure appeared in the skies above without revealing an ounce of its presence.

"Crow, do not."

The being said only three words.

But three words were enough to freeze the crow in its tracks.

Its head turned hesitantly, and it lowered its posture submissively the second he confirmed the newcomer's identity.

"Pegasus, this is my prey. Haven't we agreed to not interfere with each other's affairs?" The crow spat through gritted beak.

The Pegasus was powerful, but the crow was a king as well! He was unresigned to simply following this being's will, and he was humiliated by himself for instinctively lowering himself in front of it.

"Our agreement holds no weight in this instance. I am not acting on my will, but my master's." The Pegasus responded indifferently.

The Thunder Demon Crow's eyes narrowed in frustration, but there was nothing it could do.

He could still muster up his courage to confront the Pegasus, but the Cloud Emperor could not be disobeyed.

The emperor of this entire world; if he offended such an entity, death would be the least of his worries!

Tap!

The Pegasus gently landed on the ground and walked past the Thunder Demon Crow, not paying any mind to his presence.

He approached Damien and looked down at him with a frown on his face.

"Foolish human, come with me. My master wishes to see you."

Damien returned the creature's gaze blankly.

"What is it, fool?"

"Um...I'm a little paralyzed right now, so I could really use some help."

"..."

The Pegasus sighed and used mana to lift Damien's body onto his back.

No matter how he looked at it, he just couldn't understand what his master saw in this foolish outsider!

Chapter 1106 Lightning [4]

Over half a year passed in Grand Heavens Boundary.

The Hephaestus raid was in full swing and the universe's forces remained focused on the goal ahead.

They were a fourth of the way through the ceasefire already, but they hadn't made much progress.

The Hephaestus raid was far more difficult than their projections suggested.

Most of the universe's willing experts were sent to the Nox base camp after months of preparation, yet they found that the Nox had long been prepared for it.

Millions were lost, and despite another 3 months passing, the raid was still ongoing.

Realizing the true extent of the effort they'd have to put into securing Hephaestus, Heaven's Army made the decision to split their efforts.

Millions of 4th class and lower experts were sent to the Infected Source Worlds in the Beast Domain and the Giant Domain since those two were judged as the weakest of the remaining targets.

Contrary to the main raid, these sub-operations went surprisingly well.

The Giant Domain was cleared by the end of the 3-month period, while the Beast Domain...

...fell within weeks.

It was a truly unexpected turn of events.

For the first time, the denizens had forces on the inside to assist them in attaining victory.

These forces were the remnants of the Black Dragon Clan!

While the Golden Dragon Emperor attended the Grand Assembly, he assigned a portion of his forces to follow a trail Damien gave them to find the remains of the Black Dragon Clan.

Their main world remained hidden for generations, but once the majority of their force was subdued and enslaved, their secret could no longer stay in the shadows.

Events matched up perfectly. The Golden Dragon Clan found the world hidden in the folds of space, and the Golden Dragon Emperor was able to make contact with his Black Dragon counterpart.

As it turned out, the Black Dragon Emperor learned of what happened to his clan, and he'd come to a decision.

Rather than fighting a being who held the lives of most of his clansmen in his hands, he decided to surrender.

Perhaps it was a humiliating choice, but it was the best path to take for the survival of the clan.

After all, the Nox didn't carry an overwhelming advantage in Grand Heavens Boundary anymore.

At least, not on the surface.

Nevertheless, the Black Dragon Emperor revealed that his clan had long been in a cooperative relationship with the Nox.

Now that he'd switched sides, he gave up a load of information that led the Beast Domain's raid to inevitable success in the shortest amount of time possible.

Another two wriggling black Corrupted World Cores were left guarded in their own sections of the universe.

And everyone kept moving.

The Divine and Infernal Realms were likely far more dangerous, so they couldn't be touched so easily.

Therefore, most forces were placed in reserve and given the order to increase their strength as fast as possible.

Hephaestus once again became the focus.

And a question appeared in the minds of more perceptive experts.

Why was there such a vast difference in strength between these Infected Source Worlds?

One could argue that the strength of the Nox base reflected the strength of the domain it inhabited, but that reasoning could only be used to a certain extent.

When things became too easy, concerns arose.

The Beast Domain was one thing, but both the Giant Domain and Soul World's raids started to look incredibly suspicious with the passing of time.

So...

If the Nox truly were concentrating their forces in certain locations...

Could it be explained away as fortification, or was there some underlying purpose Heaven's Army failed to understand?

Rose, Ruyue, and Elena found themselves in a strange set of circumstances.

Just a second ago, they were rushing to Damien's location after seeing the lightning pillar dying down.

They realized the consequences that could occur if Damien was heavily injured and left on the mountainside alone.

However, before they could reach him, their bodies were swept away in a spatial storm.

They landed in a beautifully vibrant hidden cove. It was a place where space and time had no meaning, and the fluctuations of law were extreme to the point of this place being a holy land for training.

Yet, they did not want to be here.

In a time when Damien could die at any moment, how could they be resigned to staying in this strange space?!

The first thing they did was try to find a way out, but once they realized that their search was fruitless, a voice boomed down from the heavens.

"I have some matters to discuss with your companion. Stay here and reap the benefits of this place until our matters have concluded."

It was deep and dark, and its words were a demand, not a suggestion.

"Rest assured, he and you will be safe. If you are unresigned to this fate, become stronger and challenge me. That is all."

The voice answered their most pressing question and forced them to accept its words before they could reply at all.

And its presence disappeared immediately after.

The three looked at each other with deep frowns on their faces.

"No matter what we think, it's right," Elena said solemnly.

"Are any of us strong enough to withstand that Heavenly Lightning attack? Can any of us even last a second in front of its power?"

The answer was no.

Damien had to borrow the life achievements of a 4th class creature to survive, but no matter his means, he managed to live.

They couldn't say they had any means to do the same.

"We're all geniuses," Elena continued.

"We're all people who can be regarded as the peak of the younger generation, to the point where an influence like Prismatic Sun Holy Land would want to nurture us without asking anything in return."

"But that isn't enough. They wanted to train us, but they tasked him with a task as difficult as this without a hint of distrust for his abilities."

She deeply exhaled, her expression filled with unwillingness, and voiced the thought running through all their minds.

"If we want to stand by him forever, being supreme geniuses isn't enough. The only option is to become existences that defy reality, just like him."

Rose sighed.

"An entity that can transport us to a location like this can't be weak. It has no reason to lie about our safety when it can kill us with a single thought," she said, looking out into the hidden cove.

"As you said, we've been boxing ourselves in too much. The logic that we've come to know and rely on needs to be thrown away. We need to start acting outside the bounds of logic."

Ruyue nodded in agreement.

"We have gained the qualifications to have such ambition in the past weeks, and now we have been given an opportunity to turn potential into power. Since there is no other choice, we should do as the voice said and utilize it."

Damien had always been a step ahead of his peers, including them, but now that they'd reunited, this disparity was extremely pronounced.

They refused to be bogged down by their comparative weakness.

"But...who is it that did this...?" Ruyue asked hesitantly,

Rose frowned. She looked at the sky with furrowed brows and spoke.

"Considering everything, it can only be one person."

All of their expressions were the same as they internalized this truth.

The only one in this realm that could pull a stunt like this...

...was the 2nd Primal Sovereign.

Chapter 1107 Dreams/Reality [1]

Damien was able to move again not too long after the Pegasus picked him up, but he didn't have to let that be known.

He acted paralyzed and enjoyed his free ride to the peak of the mountain, grinning happily to himself.

'This beast is arrogant, but its fur is damn soft...' he thought.

'But more importantly, this means a fast track to the mission target. I only had a strategy to deal with one of them. It would've been bad if we had to continue so suddenly without finding other means.'

Damien and the girls absolutely would've died if they couldn't take time to prepare for a Thunder Demon Crow or Pegasus raid.

'And my guess was right. It looks like that Pegasus is much stronger than the other two.'

Idle thoughts swam through his mind for several minutes as the journey continued. Before he knew it, the Pegasus had touched ground again.

"Dismount me this instant. Do not think you can keep pretending," the beast said with disdain.

Damien rolled his eyes and hopped off its back.

"Don't act so hard while admitting that you let me ride you all the way here while knowing I could've walked."

"That was merely to save time. Humans are excruciatingly slow creatures."

"I can literally teleport."

"And I do not care. Cease your meaningless words and wait for my master's arrival."

Damien smirked at the Pegasus' frustrated expression. It was clear he'd won this bout.

"Your master is the Cloud Emperor?" He asked.

"You do not have the right to refer to the great lord by his title."

"Stop being so edgy and just answer the question."

"If you maintain this attitude when facing my master, you will undoubtedly die."

"Your master is a Demigod. He doesn't have the right to kill me."

The Pegasus' gaze turned hostile.

"This is not your outer world. In this world, your laws cannot rule," it stated heavily, making sure its words bore into Damien's soul.

But the man only shook his head.

"It seems you don't know enough about your master."

"You...!"

Damien turned his eyes to the sky, ignoring the fuming creature to his side.

"You've been here this whole time, haven't you? Why don't you come out and talk?"

His words were directed at nothing in particular, but they received a response all the same.

"I am surprised you could detect me."

It didn't come from the sky.

Rather, it came from the mountain itself.

The very peak they were standing on rumbled and shifted, revealing itself as the massive body of a slumbering beast!

It was a truly massive earth dragon, yet it had wings uncharacteristic of its species.

Its long neck protruded from the mountainside, no longer hidden away, and it turned its eyes towards Damien and the Pegasus.

"Child, I have long known you were special, but it now appears I have underestimated you," it said, its voice deep and rumbling through the air like a true mountain's voice.

Damien frowned.

The creature was definitely impressive. Its strength was greater than any enemy he'd seen in this place, and even stronger than his original level.

Yet...

"It's not you."

This dragon was not the one he was looking for.

"...?"

The beast's eyes narrowed, glaring at Damien.

"It is not me?"

"I didn't come here to talk to the Cloud Emperor."

"Human, you dare?!"

The Pegasus flared up in rage at his words, flourishing its aura to suppress the disrespectful outsider.

Damien responded with the Void, wrapping his body in a film of its aura and dissipating the surrounding suppression.

The earth dragon's eyes widened.

The Pegasus gritted its teeth and tried to push harder, but Damien ignored it.

"I didn't come here to say anything the Cloud Emperor needs to hear. Face me as your true self. This should be enough convincing, right?"

"Hmm..."

The dragon's maw curved into a strange smile.

"I wonder...can you handle the consequences of your words?"

"If I couldn't handle it, I wouldn't have come."

The dragon's smile widened.

"Pegasus, enough."

Its words carried mana of their own, completely dispelling the Pegasus' aura.

"I will give you the chance to achieve your wish, however, whether or not you can survive is up to you."

Damien's expression turned dignified.

He nodded, his gaze directly clashing against the dragon's.

"Come."

"Very well!"

The dragon slowly raised its head to the heavens above and opened its giant maw.

A thunderous roar, more domineering than even the Heavenly Law itself, resonated through the Severed World.

It was deafening and the dragon pressure spread through it was enough to directly blow lesser creatures to shreds, but there was a clear line of reason within it.

An archaic language, almost extinct to the modern world, was being spoken.

[Traverser...]

[...chase the stars...]

[...to the Realm of Dreams.]

VOOOOOOOM!

A massive flux of mana erupted.

Everything went white.

The world around Damien faded away. He felt the familiar sensation of spatial turbulence enveloping his figure.

And...

Clang!

Clang!

Clang!

It was audible.

The sound of shackles shattering in the storm.

Everything once lost was returned. Strength filled Damien's body and soul. He felt like he could rank up right here and now, but there was something still holding him back.

A feeling deep in his chest to not act rashly.

He reveled in the feeling of self he felt, but he realized one thing.

'This is the state I was in before I came to the Severed World, not the state I'll be in when I leave.'

The Blessing of Foundation, Universal Law, and many other gains he made in the sub-universe were hidden behind a new set of shackles.

It was evident that he hadn't been transported out of the hidden realm.

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

A massive explosion broke him out of his thoughts.

Wind brushed against his face. Bright sunlight blinded his eyes.

When his senses came to reality, he was high in the sky of a new world, above a layer of clouds that separated him from the world's surface.

Naturally, he was falling, but he wasn't in a hurry to stabilize himself.

'That explosion...'

It came from very far away, but the air around Damien was shaking.

'The shockwave hasn't died down, and...'

He frowned, circulating spatial mana through his body.

One With Dimension activated, and Damien sunk into the folds of reality, deeper than the surface layer of space that maintained the realm's stability.

In the next second, everything started quaking.

WHOOOOOOOOOOOOSH!

A heavy rush of wind laced with apocalyptic mana tore through the atmosphere and destroyed everything; from the clouds to the earth, from the air to space itself.

Damien rapidly set up layers upon layers of Dimensional Cages and built an isolated plane, separating himself just in time to avoid the mana wave ripping through the fabric of reality itself!

His expression was blank as he gazed into the scene outside.

Everything was destroyed.

The world he'd been transported to less than 5 seconds ago was nothing more than an empty hole in the void.

But a miracle unfolded next.

From top to bottom, from the very building blocks of reality to the vitality of the earth, everything in the realm was restored to normalcy within the span of 10 seconds.

A certain term came to Damien's mind when he saw it.

"Impulsive Wave."

Chapter 1108 Dreams/Reality [2]

It passed just like that.

Damien carefully returned to reality and fell through the clouds, entering the reformed world below.

'It's an exact replica of the Severed World.' He thought to himself.

Even the creatures living in this realm were directly copied from the Severed World.

The only difference was that they had no spirituality.

They were, at best, mindless husks imitating the creatures of the sub-universe.

'The Cloud Emperor called it a world of dreams, but it can't just be that. The feeling of the Void is vaguely present flowing through this realm, so it is a true existence without question. Instead of a dream world...'

'...is this the true nature of the Severed World?'

Damien realized the connection instantly.

The Severed World was an almost impossible existence. Regarding its laws, its ecosystems, and all else, there was always an inconsistency.

Though, it didn't exist in the Severed World Damien entered.

The Impulse Wave.

The strangest phenomenon of the sub-universe and the most glaring consequence of its incomplete law, the Impulse Wave utterly tore apart the realm and "reset it to a previous save."

Now, this kind of thing was absolutely possible as a result of a broken Universal Law. If Life and Death weren't properly defined, their effects of the cycle of Samsara would be affected too.

However, it wasn't something that could happen continuously.

At some point, the world would experience too much strain and collapse in on itself.

This was what made the Severed World's existence strange, and it was a fact Damien didn't realize until he deepened his comprehension in the sub-universe itself.

The Severed World was a true dream world, a dream world with such presence that it affected reality.

But its true face was this place, a place constantly destroyed and reconstructed, as if to lessen the burden on the world that could be seen.

'I can't completely understand how it functions right now, but it feels similar to a damage transfer type skill, but it's the main body that's taking damage from the subsidiary.'

If this was the main body, then the 2nd Primal Sovereign was likely to be at the top of this world's Skyrend Mountain.

'And the earth dragon was certain I wouldn't survive because I have to make it there while avoiding the Impulse Waves on my own.'

It was a seemingly impossible task.

Yet, as Damien already stated, he was undeterred.

'I've already done it once, so what's the big deal about doing it again?'

He let that arrogant thought flow through his mind as he stepped forward and embraced the darkness around him.

His first step was Ghost King's Crevice.

There was no Bertram to guide him through the Netherworld Fog this time, but he remembered the path.

Plus, the lack of spirituality in this place meant everything functioned systematically.

There wouldn't be any strange eruptions or surprises in this second journey.

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

Damien was halfway through Ghost King's Valley when the second explosion rang out.

The winds came first, roaring with sound that traveled tens or even hundreds of thousands of kilometers in an instant.

Damien once again hid himself in a fortress dimension of his creation, far sturdier this time since he was expecting the blast.

The world was destroyed and reformed around him.

'The wave's strength doesn't vary, and the interval is...'

Damien shook off his thoughts and continued moving.

He fought through the undead armies and, thankfully, avoided the Ghost King this time.

By the time he made it to the Perilous Sanctuary, the third wave struck.

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

'...ten minutes. It'll be annoying to cross the third layer in these conditions.'

Damien zoomed through the relatively harmless Perilous Sanctuary and entered the third layer within five minutes.

For the next five minutes, rather than moving towards the central region, he made his way to the great tree where the Overseer made its nest.

He reached before the 4th wave could hit, and from within the confines of his defense, he observed the destruction of the world around him carefully.

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

The All-Seeing Eyes swirled into action, just in time to catch sight of—

'Teleportation should be fine from until I reach the peak.'

He avoided it thus far so he could judge the Impulse Wave, but also because he wasn't alone in this realm.

This was obviously a test. If he cheated his way through with teleportation, the test giver naturally wouldn't be pleased.

'But the central region is average. It has the most variety of beasts and a lot of strong creatures, but it's nothing more than an average beast ecosystem to the current me. There is no point in slowly traversing it.'

The feeling of moving a million miles in a single step, he'd dearly missed it.

Reaching the foot of Skyrend Mountain in less than an instant, he stared up at its heaven-piercing gait.

'It's time to flex a little.'

The crux of the challenge was here, and Damien had no plans of holding back.

BANG!

He dug his foot into the ground and pushed with every ounce of his strength, shooting into the air like a comet.

Spacetime mana flowed around him in a beautiful river. His steps became erratic, and though time didn't pass, he moved higher and higher up the mountainside.

No, was it better to say time was repeating?

Damien only used this technique a single time before and never reattempted it because of how much strain it put on his body, but this realm had no laws to confine him.

He abused the theory in his mind and used the environment to actualize them to his heart's content.

The Impulse Wave wanted to come, it wanted to destroy everything again, but how could it?

Damien was altering his position in Spacetime directly.

With time as the x-axis and space as the y-axis, Damien was moving on that graph in a perfectly straight vertical line, changing his spatial position within the same node of time!

It was an egregiously involved action to attempt, but it was powerful beyond belief if done properly.

The Impulse Wave could destroy reality itself, so it obviously wasn't bound by space or time, but this loophole that kept its effects isolated to a specific area didn't allow the Impulse Wave to be affected by the repeating second!

It was a great deal of explanation for an equally grand feat, and with his strategy, Damien was able to pass through the cloud layer and stand on Skyrend Mountain's upper half proudly, with only a single second having passed.

'I want to check the Blessing Shrine and Lunar River, but now is not the time. Our meeting is long overdue.'

He made a quick dash to the peak, evading the Impulse Waves and mindless clones of the Pegasus and the other two kings.

And in an astonishingly short amount of time, he reached his destination.

In the center of this land, perched atop the tallest mountain, was a being so large its shadow was painted in the clouds.

That being was coiled up around itself and breathing calmly, hibernating, however, there was a massive bloody wound on the side of its body that created a stark contrast from its otherwise peaceful appearance.

Every time a drop of blood fell from that wound, the mana it carried burst into the realm and destroyed it in full.

This being was clearly dying.

And that being...

'...is who I came to see.'

Chapter 1109 Dreams/Reality [3]

The Second Primal Sovereign.

Just like the fifth in his species, he was a chimera of several kinds of beasts with a draconic undertone.

His head was that of an eagle, proud and domineering. His body was both feathered and furred, a twisted mix between a wolf and an unknown short-feathered bird species. He had the tail of a phoenix, and the expansive wings of a dragon, which completed his truly unmeasurable figure.

Despite the unnerving nature of his chimeric body, he gave off a feeling of absolute might. It was an unconscious aura exuded by beings of extreme strength, a phenomenon that was generally rare to see outside peak experts.

Yet, he was clearly at the end of his life.

There was hardly any vitality coming from him, almost to the point where Damien wasn't sure if he'd be able to have a conversation with this creature before it passed.

But his worries were unwarranted.

He wouldn't have been tasked to come all this way to find a corpse.

[You have arrived quickly, child.]

The 2nd Primal Sovereign's eyes slowly opened.

[Come, let me see you.]

Damien's brows furrowed, his expression morphing in confusion. This tone...wasn't what he expected.

'I don't sense any hostility, so...'

He carefully made his way forward until he was only a few feet away from the dying being, face to face with its eye.

"It's a pleasure to meet you, 2nd Primal Sovereign," he said, bowing his head slightly.

The Primal Sovereign's eyes softened. It slowly shook its head.

[There is no need for such courtesies between us. You may call me Uncle.]

"...I'm sorry?"

[Haha, it is okay for you to be confused. You came to me because you require something, no? Do not be shy. I shall answer any questions you may have.]

Damien frowned at the undeserved hospitality.

This was a stranger, and a beast as old as the universe itself, so why was it treating him like this?

'And...uncle?'

Damien shook off his thoughts and glanced at the hole in the Primal Sovereign's side.

"I don't think it'll be possible to talk when you're in this condition, though?"

[Worry not. Now that you have arrived, the method to heal my wound has also arrived.]

"You mean..."

[Indeed. This injury was inflicted by a great being from the past and cannot be patched through ordinary means. What I require is the power of my origin.]

Damien smiled wryly. As expected, the beast wanted something from him!

As he recently confirmed, Primal Sovereigns were born in tandem with the universe, so their origin was naturally the Void.

Damien didn't have a problem with using Void Mana to help the creature, but the situation itself was strange.

"Is there a being in existence who can do that? I can't easily believe someone out there can deal damage that can only be fixed by the origin of all things, especially not in this lower universe."

He questioned it but moved faithfully to the other side of the Primal Sovereign's body and started injecting the energy of the Void into his wound.

He devoured a Primal Sovereign before, but he didn't have much memory of it due to the Abyssal Corridor. All he remembered was the nonsensical spatial dimensions that existed inside of the Fifth Primal Sovereign, which made him extremely confused about the beast's anatomy.

From the looks of it, the hole would heal itself as long as the Void was present, but Damien wanted to know the bodily functions of one of these beasts, the closest beings to the Law of Space in existence.

He observed from up close and took in every detail.

It was a crater-like wound that dug deep into the creature's flesh and just barely pierced into its internal. The layers of skin and muscle that made up the crater itself were decayed and infected to the point where any surgeon would recommend amputation.

And it was laced with coursing lightning, inky black yet occasionally flashing with a myriad of colors.

Damien's frown deepened before the Sovereign could voice his answer.

"Saint Emperor."

[...so that is the title he has been granted this time.]

"...?"

[Child, since you have recognized his mana, you should know a bit about his history, no?]

"I do, but that's not what I want to talk about right now. I have a feeling that the information you have won't provide me any answers."

[I see...]

If it had to do with history, Damien saw everything he needed to see from Iris. The questions he came here to answer had nothing to do with the Nox...or at least, he hoped.

[...then, what would you like to ask?]

"How did you create the Severed World?"

He wanted to start simple and get his personal questions out of the way before asking anything that could topple his worldview.

His original interest in the Severed World was its very existence as a sub-universe, and there was no better person to explain its function than the creator itself.

[Aha, you are quite persistent in your pursuit of strength.]

The Primal Sovereign answered, sighing lightly as he felt the pain of his wound subsiding slightly.

[As you may have realized, this sub-universe is a product of my dreams. In a sense, it does not exist at all.]

[I have remained in slumber for an eternity, because in my current state, opening my eyes would cause utter calamity. The true scale of my wound...is not something you can comprehend.]

Damien's eyes narrowed.

"Then, right now we're..."

[...inside a pocket space within my body. The Severed World you know is also a varied dimension that I have connected to the outside world.]

Damien sighed.

'So, in the end, it was formed through a shortcut.'

The Primal Sovereign smirked almost indiscernibly.

[Child, are you underestimating me? While I may have used my own body as a foundation, transforming it into its current state was quite the task.]

A trace of mana flowed through the air and immediately caught Damien's eye.

'It looks like nothing, but the amount of information packed in that stream of energy is so immense I can't even perceive it unless I devour it.'

[I shall show you my process after our conversation ends. You will not be disappointed.]

Damien nodded, his expression eternally negative.

In what little was already said, there was too much to process.

Disregarding everything about the sub-universe, its nature alluded to the unimaginable size of the Primal Sovereign's true body.

If the body Damien saw now was an Avatar, then the fact that even a portion of the wound's existence was reflected meant the damage the Saint Emperor was able to cause was terrifying.

'I didn't want to think about the Nox again, but I guess it's good to know the true height of my enemies.'

The thoughts he'd been entertaining about a smooth journey to power were tossed out. He knew they were fruitless from the start, but they were nice while they lasted.

'Since it's this pressing, I'll get to it after one more.'

He was definitely unhappy that he had to throw out some smaller questions, but important matters came first.

"Tell me..." Damien said firmly.

"Tell me everything you know about the Void."

Chapter 1110 Dreams/Reality [4]

The Void.

Damien knew it as the origin of everything, he knew that he could reach it by continuing on his path of conquering the foundational laws, but he still didn't have a true, inscrutable definition of the concept.

It was similar to his situation with Universal Law, but far vaguer, to the point where he didn't believe he'd ever be able to perfectly describe its existence.

[We call the Void our origin, but it is not our direct Ancestor. Our mother is another entity entirely.]

The 2nd Primal Sovereign's first words already shook Damien's perception.

When this creature said "our," he wasn't merely referring to Space Beasts or even Primal Sovereigns, but all of his siblings, including the universe itself!

A new form of existence was forced into Damien's worldview, separating him further from the Void.

[We came second, yet, we are all creations of the Void the same, regardless of our nature.]

Damien's eyes sharpened. The way he worded that sentence...

'It's a concept, not an entity.'

Damien's mind whirled from these brief two sentences. He rapidly sifted through his memories and comprehensions to find the hidden piece of the puzzle.

'There's no way I haven't come in contact with it yet. At this point, I've approached almost every primordial existence. Somewhere, somehow, I've learned of these concepts. I just have to find them and define them.'

What could precede the universe?

The Void gave birth to "something else" before the universe came to be.

Which meant the entity that was born needed to exist before the universe.

'I thought my path would lead me to the Void, but I was wrong. I made a crucial mistake from the start.'

His current path led him not to the final goal, but to the gate he needed to open to reach it.

The 5 elements.

Life and Death.

Space and Time.

Creation and Destruction.

'And rumored to stand above them, Nihility.'

The concept that represented the nothingness before the universe's birth, such was the identity of the concept just barely mentioned to him during his very first class change.

Damien, to this day, viewed it as a synonym for the Void, nothing more than an alternate name.

'But there was something that existed before the universe, yet was lesser than the Void.'

The nothingness itself was birthed along with the cycle as a defined entity. Even though the existence of absolute nothingness was impossible to imagine, it had somehow been defined.

'Wait...the existence of nothingness...isn't that...'

Right, every force had an equal and opposite. The law of Yin and Yang, the concept of duality, suggested that even Nihilism couldn't be defined without the presence of "existence."

The Primal Sovereign smiled.

[Do not think further, child. Follow your heart until the road no longer exists before you, and then...]

"Use the experience I gained along the way to carve my own path."

[As all things go, this must not be rushed.]

Damien nodded in agreement.

'The Primal Sovereign can be considered a grandson of the Void, and since I'm its chosen, it isn't wrong to consider him an uncle of sorts. With his status and research on Heavenly Law, his decision to intervene here says something.'

Some things were meant to be understood with one's senses rather than their thoughts, and forming a prior perception of them might instead negatively impact one's comprehension.

Damien wasn't willing to risk such a mistake, especially not on his main path.

Huu...

He deeply exhaled and gathered his thoughts.

'I thought I was getting further away, but instead, I feel closer than ever to that hidden truth. Still, to think information like that showed up so early...'

Damien suddenly became curious about the system.

It used to hold such importance, but he rarely utilized or even saw traces of it recently.

'Is it like this for everyone, or have I just been moving further and further from its control?'

The system relied on the Heavenly Law. The growth path it made available was constricted within the universe's standards.

Yet, for a while now...

...Damien had not been acting within the bounds of what the universe would allow.

'It's surprising that I don't get hit by Heavenly Retribution often in Grand Heavens Boundary. The sub-universe based on its laws punished me when I tested its limits, but every time I abuse the Void outside is directly provoking the Universal Law and it's never confronted me...'

His expression turned solemn. The question had to be asked.

"Is it a result of my power, or did the universe become weak to the point where it can't do anything even while knowing its rules are being broken?"

The Primal Sovereign, who had been calmly enjoying Damien's treatment as the man submerged himself in thought, raised his head curiously.

[Hm? Did you not wish to learn about the Void?]

"What I gained before was more than enough."

[...haha, I understand.]

His positive expression gradually vanished.

[Do you truly wish to know?]

"I have to."

[...]

The Sovereign sighed in acceptance.

[It is as you said. The universe of today has shriveled to the point where your actions cannot be interfered with. Despite your weakness, the mere presence of the Void is enough to break the shackles of Universal Law.]

"How did it become like this? How expansive was it at the start?"

[The cause can be described as a natural decay exacerbated by external forces.]

"How fast would the decay have been without them?"

[Hardly noticeable. Even millions of years are nothing to the lifespan of a universe.]

"Were there different forces or just the one I know?"

[You are already aware of the answer.]

"I really don't like that answer."

[However, it is reality.]

"Haa..."

Damien sighed and sat down, manipulating his mana to prevent blood from falling from the wound and causing more Impulse Waves.

Throughout the entire history of the universe, the Nox had been present to oppose it.

Damien almost laughed at the absurdity of it all.

Just what kind of monstrous race were they?

And just what could possibly drive them to dismantle and destroy the universe from the beginning of time?

[Your second question is something even I cannot describe. If you wish to understand more about this truth and the questions rising in your heart, you must explore the Abyss.]

Damien's face remained firm and unchanging, yet something in his heart hardened.

A Nox race targeting Grand Heavens Boundary was not out of Damien's plans. Even a Nox race that targeted a larger universe that became Grand Heavens Boundary was something he accounted for.

But the Primal Sovereign told of a universe whose size even a being born alongside it could not explain, the truths of which lay in a place he'd long realized his connection with.

He could no longer put it off.

He needed to explore the Abyss.

It couldn't be done before the ceasefire ended, but he couldn't waste any time after his rematch with Bai Yumo to set out.

'This year...might be the last year of freedom I'll have for a very long time.'

He mentally prepared himself and prepared the final confirmation he needed.

"This universe..."

The hope remaining in his heart...

"...is it going to die?"

...was that spark just a delusion?