

Void 1151

Chapter 1151 Darkness [8]

Damien encountered a strange problem as his time in isolation continued.

He didn't have enough arms.

It was fine when he could eliminate tens of millions of Nox in a swing of his arm, but it was different now.

More and more challengers were appearing.

Against the Higher Nox who had the nerve to challenge him, Damien had to focus on the battle more, and that left gaps for the lesser species to make their way past him.

If he had backup, he could use them to hold the line while he focused on bigger enemies, but he didn't have anything of the sort.

So why didn't he just make some?

Most Demigods had Avatars they used to take care of things disallowed to them by the universal restrictions. Damien wasn't at their level yet, but he was confident he could do it if he tried.

The main method people used to create Avatars was simple but a bit cruel.

Essentially, they placed a piece of their soul in the body of a being without a developed consciousness and took the priority position.

This was the only way for those without the ability to create the fundamentals of life to have Avatars that were made of flesh and blood.

There were others who could use mana to make Avatars indistinguishable from flesh and blood beings, but they were highly specialized and used methods that couldn't be copied by the average Demigod.

In Damien's case, the former wasn't possible with his current situation, while the latter was above his power level.

'It's too early for an Avatar.'

Avatars were more significant than Damien originally thought.

The reason people only had one was because an Avatar was one's lifeblood. It was an extension of their body, not something that could be constantly replicated.

After all, one's soul couldn't be recovered easily. To invest in an Avatar was like having a child.

'Then...clones?'

Damien wanted to find a way to create an infinite number of himself that could fight properly without causing severe backlash if they were destroyed.

Sentience was not a requirement. He just needed beings he could control like body parts and maneuver flexibly.

That would allow him to create an army of cannon fodder he didn't have to worry about.

Not wanting to see death in his allies was part of the reason Damien didn't just use the Sanctuarians to help him here.

'It should be possible.'

His ambition was one of fantasy, but he believed he could bring it into reality.

With the Void's assistance, the bounds of reality were whatever he wished them to be.

'Where do I start?'

The first step was to create a preliminary model for the first clone.

The process could be broken into three stages: giving form, adjusting power, and granting spirituality.

'The last step should be the easiest.'

Damien had no access to his soul, but he had experience in splitting his mind from when he had to put it back together in the Primordial Undying Realm's Trial World.

The solution for the backlash problem was to use his mind instead of his soul to connect him to the clone.

The hard part was the second step.

With Damien's mana control, creating a human figure out of his mana was easy. Putting his consciousness into it wasn't as simple, but he was able to understand the fundamentals with a few days of effort.

But granting it power was something else.

'This is why people use their souls.'

Since the soul was the basis of everything, it held records of one's strength that would migrate into the secondary body.

When it was just mana and mind, there was no such record.

'Can I solve this problem with the Void?'

Could the Void hold his Legend?

'I have to try.'

This portion of the process was intuitive.

Damien didn't actually understand how it worked, because he didn't understand how to access his Legend and edit it.

Was it even possible?

Likely not.

Therefore, he made a "wish."

In the same way he saved Bai Yumo, he willed the Void to accomplish his desire without understanding how it could do so.

And it...

...obviously didn't work.

'Hmm...'

Even if he wanted to wish something from the Void, he needed to know what he was wishing.

He needed to understand where his Legends were so the Void could connect those two points.

He'd been trying for over a week now, but the Void and his Legend couldn't find a point of connection.

If that point of connection existed, it would be possible, but it was logically impossible to create it.

'However, logic only applies to those weak enough to succumb to it.'

He could surpass the bounds of logic. He'd done it already.

It was just a matter of figuring out the way to do it here.

Year 2 in No Return Pass was progressing steadily.

By the time it was over, he would have this problem solved.

From the third year onward, he wouldn't be bogged down by the endless and monotonous battle environment of this place.

That was his resolution.

The Giant Domain's deterioration didn't end with the first ten thousand worlds.

In batches of the same amount, worlds disappeared every month, creating a situation that could no longer be ignored by the higher-ups of Heaven's Army.

Forces were properly allocated for the first time, and a deep investigation began.

However, a little more than 60,000 worlds already disappeared.

Of those inhabitable, this was almost half.

And of those that were taken, 25,000 ended up in Damien's possession.

The rest were taken by the Soul Emperor and transferred to an unknown location for unknown reasons that only Damien had a hint of.

The problem was, no matter how much investigation was done, nothing came out of it.

The signs of disappearance were nonexistent, and even with excessive scanning through various means, no signs of Nox presence were detected.

Was there any way to describe this aside from a demonic miracle?

There was no way for formations or lesser beings to understand what was happening.

So the only option left was to send a Divinity.

Director Alucard was chosen after much deliberation due to his openly neutral stance. He took the 11 remaining Zodiacs of Hidden Death Valley and launched a full-scale sweep of the Giant Domain.

The awareness of a Demigod was magical. In a similar fashion to Damien's eyes, they could see the universe through a completely different lens, bringing all things hidden into the light.

This was the only ability of Demigods that could be used properly without the restriction's interference.

And with it, the results of their search were astonishing.

There truly were no Nox in the Giant Domain, nor were there signs of outside intervention on the surfaces of those worlds.

However, there was something.

Hidden deep within the World Cores, almost hidden from even their powerful gazes, there was something like a virus.

It rewired their base functions, and no matter what the consciousnesses of the World Cores desired, they would automatically be transported to the Abyss against their will!

A scramble to find a solution began immediately.

However, the response was simply too late.

There was no time left for the Giant Domain.

Chapter 1152 Darkness [9]

Within a week's time, the remaining Judgement Order members in the shadow army appeared in the hidden safe house.

Their number had been reduced to half of what they started with. Every team suffered losses without fail.

Luckily, the leaders all survived. They were the main fighting force, therefore, their survival was imperative.

A week was a decent amount of time. Rose used it to strategize an exit, understanding that the enemy would know their position by the time the week ended.

It was a risk assuming they wouldn't find it earlier, but she didn't let this stop her.

She refused to leave her people behind.

Of the group who visited Commander Huo, all except Ximen Wuhen were team leaders. Since she had a support power, she was put into Su Ren's squad to provide aid from the back line.

The leader of the tenth squadron was a man without a name. He wore a demon mask and never revealed his identity, insisting that others merely called him "Beast."

His entrance into the Judgement Order was definitely the strangest since he had no connection to its members or cause, but he approached them on his own and even willingly signed a variety of Mana Oaths that kept him loyal, so Rose and the rest didn't mind trusting him.

He was the last to arrive, and the only one who returned alone.

"They killed everyone," he said solemnly, sitting down heavily and removing his shirt.

The others instantly saw the terrifying gash lining the entirety of his torso. It was so deep one could glimpse his rib cage through the bloody folds.

"They've gotten stronger, or they've been hiding their strength. It's impossible for us to leave this cave."

"What do you mean impossible?" Aishia asked.

She joined this group to meet Damien again after so long, but she realized later that such a thing would be impossible for a long time.

That was impossible because the man she wanted to see was trapped in a place surrounded by billions or even more enemies.

Was this situation the same?

"They're done sending grunts after us. The enemies outside are all powerful enough to wipe us out alone, but there are hundreds of them prowling the area. The second we leave, we're done."

"No, even if we do not leave, we will not be safe," Su Ren added, his eyes piercing the cave protections.

"Have they already come?" Rose asked, entering the conversation.

"Mm, they should be arriving in five minutes or less."

"Strength level?"

"It is as Beast said. At least High Commanders. I cannot sense signs of a Supreme, but I do see at least three Executioners."

6th, 7th, and 8th revolution masters. This kind of force was hunting down a group of young geniuses whose strongest member was still in the 4th revolution.

"Su Ren, can you handle it?"

"No. I can fight against High Commanders, but if the Executioners come, I will not be able to save anyone."

"Any word from Hera?"

"..."

"Dead. Her life crystal shattered," Long Chen sighed.

"All communications to the outside world have been cut completely. I can't contact my Holy Land for support either. We're on our own," Atticus added.

It was an extremely dire situation.

However—

"—are you afraid of death?"

Rose had been preparing for this situation for a week, and she never expected help from others.

"If we were afraid of death, would we have joined you in this madness?"

Xue Fang grinned as he spoke, and the rest joined him happily.

They might've been insane, but they were insane for a cause.

They wouldn't return to sanity at this point. They were way too far.

"Then...let's do something insane."

The path of escape was cut off. Clinging to it was just lunacy.

"I have a plan..."

As Rose continued to speak, everyone realized one thing.

They weren't nearly crazy enough.

Because this plan was probably the craziest possible thing they could do in this situation.

Yet...wasn't it also the most probable?

No, even thinking like that was madness.

It was utterly improbable and downright stupid, but it was so enticing none of them could say no.

"Even if we make it, we can only call one person. Are you confident in your choice?" Aishia asked for the group.

Rose's eyes twinkled with a strange light.

"What about you? Are all of you confident in my choice?"

They were a team. Rose never planned to decide things unilaterally.

But her leadership skills were really something.

In the past few months, the reason the Judgement Order was able to achieve so much acclaim was mainly due to her presence.

It was an organization created by the younger generation, but it couldn't exist with them alone.

Naturally, they had a variety of sponsors.

Elena roped in Commanded Huo, Atticus roped in the Fallen Star Holy Master, and even Su Ren convinced his master to help them one time.

But Rose didn't have these kinds of connections. She used her power and political ability to convince several tens of Demigods to sponsor their cause, including those friendly with Damien like Luciel.

Without her interference, they wouldn't have had many options if they needed help.

Now that the situation arose, Demigods weren't an option, so where could they find the person who could save them?

Or rather, they needed to find the perfect assistance for the current situation, not some savior.

Rose, Ruyue, and Elena jointly made a decision, and while others wouldn't understand it, they were confident beyond measure that their plan would work.

If they were confident, was there a reason for anyone else to hesitate?

"I think I can speak for everyone when I say this," Xue Yue said, standing up firmly.

She'd lost the immaturity she held in the Cloud Plane, including her inferiority complex and doubt.

Standing here as a respectable woman and warrior in her own right, she only had one thing to say.

"If we're going to die anyway, make sure we can go out in a blaze of glory."

Rose's eyes widened.

A smile formed on her face.

"I don't want us to go into this expecting death, but I can't guarantee our collective survival. However, none of us will die pointlessly. This much was guaranteed by the Heavens the second we stepped onto this path."

Blazing determination filled the room as the 50 survivors prepared themselves for what came next.

The Judgement Order.

To those on the outside, it was a group of youths rebelling against the cruelty of society.

However, how could their intention be so naive?

Rose had something else in mind upon the creation of this group, a promise those outside their order took as a joke.

They were going to eradicate the enemy.

At a time like this, when escape was no longer possible, there was only one option remaining.

It was time to kill!

"Our first target is the Jackal, otherwise known as the Hound Lord."

The Demigod who managed this section of the shadow army, a member of the Inhuman Faction.

He was the first target.

The Judgement Order, a faction that did not discriminate by status when punishing evil.

It was time for them to kill their first Divinity.

Chapter 1153 Operation [1]

"Is everyone finished?"

Rose's voice rang through the hidden safe house as she addressed the rest of the members.

They were moving extremely fast at the moment while tracking the movements of their enemies, but with their current speed, they would be able to make it in time.

"Leader, all the information collected by our squads has been collected into this jade slip," a man said, passing the slip over.

Rose nodded and took it, glancing over it.

The average power level of their enemies had changed, but the general layout was roughly the same.

It was necessary to understand this information before they started working towards any plan.

"Hmm..."

Rose furrowed her brows as she continued reading.

"Over thirty Executioners and over a hundred High Commanders...we won't be able to avoid the Supremes either."

Their first goal was simple. They needed to make their way to the summoning platform in the Nox's possession.

They only theorized its existence, but it had to be present. Otherwise, the Inhuman Emperor couldn't have arrived the way he did.

He didn't come from outside the camp, but from within as if he was always there.

Yet, if he was always there, they wouldn't have been able to do anything from the start.

Therefore, there had to be a summoning platform.

The only problem was that its projected location was centralized between the residences of the three Supremes in the camp.

It would be impossible to sneak there, but getting there was an absolute necessity.

"Does anyone have any ideas?" Rose asked.

"I do," Su Ren responded.

"However, we must speak of it while moving. The enemies are far too close."

"Moving?"

Long Chen posed the question. How were they supposed to leave in this situation?

"This is why I keep telling you to sharpen your perception. You are wasting those eyes of yours."

"Eh? I'm itching to fight you too, but it can wait, can't it?"

"You know this is not my intent at this time."

"Tch."

Long Chen and Su Ren had quite the rivalry, only natural due to their contrasts as sword and blade practitioners, but that was beside the point.

Long Chen's draconic eyes could see through truths, but he wasn't able to see the escape route Rose created in the past week, a testament to his lack of skill.

"Tsk. Fine, I'll work on it from now on. It's not like I had an opportunity to focus on anything other than power before this anyway."

Long Chen folded after receiving an explanation, and Rose led her fifty comrades into the bedroom space at the back of the safe house.

"For starters, we're going down. Nothing has been said about the underground of Eien, which means it's either desolate or crawling with dangers, but it's our only option," she said, removing her illusions to reveal a massive hole in the floor.

It dropped into darkness, making it difficult to tell its depth, but it was definitely a severe drop.

"We won't be able to take this all the way there, but it's a good starting point. Is everyone ready?"

Her question prompted several excited and determined cries.

She smiled.

"Then, let's get started."

In groups of ten, the Judgement Order members jumped into the hole and used their mana expertly to get them down to the bottom without raising too much of a commotion.

Elena and Ruyue went last, giving Rose one last nod before jumping.

Left alone, Rose summoned her mana and began the process of creation.

She weaved threads of illusion into a false reality that could not be seen through.

The safe house vanished into nonexistence, replaced by damp and rocky walls like an ordinary cave.

Figured spawned next. Fifty of them, with the exact characteristics of those they mimicked down to the smallest details in their auras.

These illusions didn't have much power, but each had a supply of mana she provided that they could use to emulate power for a period of time.

"You all know what to do, right? Go now and run until you die."

The illusions nodded and rushed to the cave entrance.

Behind them, Rose jumped into the hole and covered the entrance behind her, joining her team.

The drop was roughly ten kilometers. This deep in the ground, most wouldn't be able to detect them with a sweeping scan.

Which meant, until her illusions died, they would be free of monitoring.

"Phew..."

She deeply exhaled.

BOOOOOOM!

A massive explosion, made vague by the layers of rock between it and them, rang out on the surface.

"Move!"

Rose's command was absolute.

The group took turns making a tunnel through the thick and mana-laced ground of Eien, running with as much speed as possible towards their destination.

Meanwhile, a fearsome scene presented itself on the surface.

Several High Commanders were approaching the cave, only a few kilometers away. The Executioners behind them didn't make the same haste, but they were also moving forward.

At that moment—

BOOOOOOM!

The cave exploded into bits of rubble that flew into the sky.

Fifty members of the Judgement Order rushed out of the explosion in different directions, scattering like rats.

"Humans! Do not attempt this meaningless stunt!"

The roar of a High Commander boomed through the atmosphere, but those it was directed at paid it no mind.

Their goal was in the opposite direction of their true selves. While the true Judgement Order went further into the enemy camp, their clones escaped as fast as possible!

However, speed was relative. In front of High Commanders, the lesser members were just chickens to be slaughtered.

"Didn't I say not to run?"

A High Commander with deep purple hair growled as he grabbed the neck of one of the female illusions.

"Be grateful to die by the hands of this Krato. If Rakash got you instead, I do not know what vile things would have happened to you."

Despite his words, the expression on his face was filled with cruel ecstasy.

"Unfortunately, a beautiful woman like you must die, because that is what the Lord desires!"

Bang!

He tightened his grip in an instant, and the woman's body exploded.

A rain of blood drenched his body, making him shiver in delight as he glanced at the rest of the rats scurrying away.

"Kekekeke! Come! All of you come to me!"

Bang!

He dashed with such force that he broke through the air. He went after the lesser members first before targeting the leaders, who were being chased by the Rakash mentioned earlier.

BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!

Bodies exploded, blood showered the earth, and the satisfying squelching of broken human bodies made Krato's entire body fill with adrenaline.

"Rakash! Are you still chasing dogs?! Hahahaha!" He yelled wildly.

"Shut up, Krato! If you are not busy, then help me!" Rakash responded with a growl.

The leaders were definitely stronger. If they were able to avoid Rakash for so long, they couldn't be ordinary.

However...

He didn't realize it because of just how much blood was covering him.

The longer Krato chased the enemy, the more layers of that blood disappeared from existence.

After all...

No matter how real they felt, they were nothing more than illusions!

Chapter 1154 Operation [2]

Because Rose's illusions could only mimic and not master the strengths of the people she cloned, their only real advantage was size.

Being smaller than the Nox by several feet, they were able to weave through the chaotic environment with much more dexterity, which was what allowed them to avoid their two pursuers for an extended period of time.

Only, there weren't only two after them.

Rakash and Krato were the ones who chased the fastest, but once the rest arrived, there was no chance at all.

One by one, each member of the Judgement Order was turned into mincemeat.

All except Rose.

She stood surrounded by ten High Commanders, her neck in the hands of an Executioner.

"This is their leader. Let us take her back to the Lord. He has been eager to torture this one," the Executioner said.

"Sir, can't we have a bite first? Humans are a rare breed in the universe. I am curious about how they taste."

"Hm?"

The Executioner looked at Rakash, who spoke, with a cold gaze.

"You wish to put your hands on the Lord's things?"

"Nothing like that! However, this piece of scrap meat, the Lord wouldn't mind if we touched it, right?"

"WRONG!"

The Executioner's words boomed through the surroundings, shattering the black trees around them into pieces.

"Do you not know who this woman is?" He continued.

"This is a treasured person of 'that man.'"

"That man? You mean..."

The Executioner nodded.

"The man that felled the Saint King. This is his woman."

The eyes of those listening widened.

The meat they grabbed was far more valuable than expected!

"Hehe...the Lord will have a splendid time with her...I am almost jealous."

"No need to be. This one is not for pleasure, after all."

Those ominous words were the end of their conversation. Instead of entertaining his lessers more, the Executioner leapt into the air, flying back towards the base.

In his grasp, Rose didn't make a single move, almost like a doll.

After all, she was one.

'Should I detonate it, or should I wait?'

In the tunnels below, the real Rose contemplated on it.

If she waited, she would be able to grasp more of the enemy's positions, but...

'The effects should be wearing off soon. Those High Commanders won't take long to realize.'

Rose couldn't trust what she thought was common knowledge.

Regardless of her power, she couldn't be sure that the Nox didn't have a way to stop her from dispelling her illusion.

If a Supreme got a hold of her clone, they would likely be able to trace their location through the mana connection!

Naturally, if they didn't know she was an illusion, this problem wouldn't occur.

Unfortunately, she didn't have infinite mana to waste on maintaining the bloodstain illusions, so this wasn't a possibility.

"Hey," she said through her clone.

"What is it, human? Begging for your life?" The Executioner responded, looking down on her with condescension.

"No, nothing like that. Do you think I'm such a weak person? It's just..."

"Sir, bad news!"

The call of a High Commander came from below.

A grin spread on Rose's face.

"It's all fake! The blood is an illusion!"

"Bye, bitch."

BOOOOOOOOOOOM!

Rose collected all the mana she spent on the clones into her clone body and exploded it in a rush of fiery mana.

The air was consumed by an explosive cloud that raged for several seconds before dying down.

The Executioner stood there with empty hands, unharmed.

Yet, extremely angry.

"HUMAN!" He roared.

"I WILL KILL YOU!"

It was an empty declaration since he still had to deliver that human to his superior, but the rest...

He would make sure she watched as the rest were brutally torn apart and devoured by his minions.

He would make her experience hell!

"SPREAD OUT AND SEARCH! THE REAL ONES COULDN'T HAVE GOTTEN FAR!"

His furious roar spread for several tens of kilometers, and every Nox being in that area obeyed his order.

A fierce manhunt began. From the location of the cave outward, all forces searched for the enemy.

However, their preliminary results were nil!

"We will not abandon this area until we find them. The Lord is serious about getting his hands on that woman," the Executioner said.

They hadn't been found yet, but it was impossible for them to disappear.

There was no "if."

It was only a matter of "when."

"It looks like we've been found out," Rose said in the underground.

"Oh? That lasted longer than expected," Aishia responded.

"Mm, but we have to start moving seriously now. It won't be long before they find the entrance to this place."

The rest nodded in agreement.

Rose made sure the entrance was hidden thoroughly with illusions, and when the cave was destroyed afterward, its rubble covered the original hole's location entirely.

However, it was just a matter of moving the rubble. Since they were already expecting illusions, the one she set wouldn't last long.

"We have the advantage right now. It's time to move into the second step of the plan."

They needed to surface soon. It wasn't because of the enemy, but the environment.

Eien was not a place that people were meant to explore underground. The rock was as hard as bedrock for a mortal, and the further they went towards its edge, the harder it got.

At this point, it was difficult to make progress fast enough to effectively escape with this method.

So surfacing was the only option.

"We need to be quiet. As long as they don't detect us upon exiting, we should be able to move properly," Rose continued.

"Everyone form groups of three. Focus on synergy. For this next part, we'll be moving forward while utilizing guerrilla assassination techniques."

The goal was to misdirect the enemy as much as possible.

Direct assassination would only give away their position with the Nox's strange collective confidence, but if they took the guerrilla route, there were still possibilities open to them.

"Whatever you do, do not get caught. If you get caught, die before they can do anything. This is the only path to salvation."

They'd been doing fine thus far because they were far separated from the powerful foes ahead.

That wouldn't be the case any longer.

As everyone internalized the danger of their coming steps, they gradually and quietly inclined their path steeply to make their way to the surface.

At the same time...

"Sir Valakos, we've found it!"

On the surface, a High Commander sent a message to the Executioner who commanded him.

The man arrived instantly.

He looked down at the seemingly normal ground below and then back up at the High Commander.

"An illusion?"

"Yes, sir."

"I see."

BANG!

He stomped his foot down and tore away the illusory rock layer Rose left behind, revealing the deep hole.

"Tch. Pesky rats," Valakos sneered.

"Give chase. I will monitor the situation from above."

"Yes, sir! How many should we take?"

"How many troops...?"

Valakos' eyes shone with a light of cruelty.

"All of them. When you find those rats, kill all except the pink one."

"Yes, sir!"

"Oh, and also..."

He turned his gaze to Krato and Rakash.

"You can do whatever you want with the others. I won't say anything."

The High Commanders grinned maniacally.

Free reign?

The things they could do with this privilege...

"Kekeke, none of you are getting away!"

Chapter 1155 Operation [3]

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The sound of Krato and Rakash leading their legion through the underground tunnel in chase of their prey was blaring.

They smashed the tunnel apart loudly on purpose, with the intent of terrifying their victims before going for the kill.

Unfortunately for them, Rose was several steps ahead.

By her command, the Judgement Order split into groups of three and spread out through the black forest.

The Nox forces remaining here were thinly spread since a majority of High Commanders followed Valakos' order and entered the underground, however, their average strength had gone up significantly.

Valakos was in charge of the area they started in, but there were roughly ten more Executioners wandering the dark forest searching for them.

Executioners were off-limits.

Regardless of their personal or combined power, unless their entire group decided to work together in a prolonged battle, taking one down wasn't possible.

High Commanders, on the other hand, were different.

'The enemy doesn't know we aren't trying to escape yet. Right now, they think the diversion tactic was meant to cover our retreat.'

Technically speaking, back towards the Blood-Drenched Wilderness wasn't the only direction to escape in.

They could very well go east or west and escape into a new territory of Eien, where the shadow army camp wouldn't know of their existence.

At that point, retreat would still be difficult, but not as impossible.

Therefore, Rose's plan consisted of another layer of trickery.

The Judgement Order scattered and did as they were told.

In various parts of the dark forest, High Commanders quietly fell without even seeing the killers who brought their end.

The deaths were staggered strangely. 17 died one by one, and once they were felled, another 17 joined them with the same pattern.

The traces of these assassinations were hidden well in the darkened earth, especially after careful treatment was given by the killers themselves, but it wasn't too perfect.

After all, these tracks still needed to be discovered, albeit after a good deal of effort.

Shiing!

A barely visible flicker of sword intent traveled through the dark forest and sliced a High Commander's neck, causing it to spurt a fountain of blood.

The High Commander grabbed his throat with widened eyes and opened his mouth to scream, but at that moment, a blade found its way to his neck, severing what remained and cutting his head directly off.

A stream of greyish mana found its way into both parts of his bisected corpse and removed their ability to heal. In just a few seconds, the High Commander turned into an ink puddle on the ground.

"They should be finding it soon, yes?"

"Yeah, but this plan seems a little too easy. They might believe it for a while, but it's definitely not enough for them to drop their pursuit."

"That is because this is only a piece of the puzzle. This operation is to remove the attention of these Executioners in the field. I am certain sister-in-law has crafted something greater for us to progress into the encampment."

"Mm, I don't doubt her mind, it just feels a bit off. Maybe I'm overthinking things?"

"Perhaps you are."

Su Ren and Long Chen, the only group of two among the current units, finished their job and moved to the next.

Usually, when a practitioner felt something off, passing it over as mere coincidence or overthinking was the wrong move.

The constantly evolving perception of a practitioner never left room for coincidences. If something felt wrong, something was wrong.

However, this was a special case.

Because, unlike the rest, Long Chen hadn't had much contact with the Nox.

He participated in the Niflheim infiltration and fought Nox on Holy Light Star, but that was it. Outside of these instances, Long Chen did not interact with the invading race more than once or twice.

Because of this, his knowledge of the Nox's tendencies was lacking.

Yes, it was true that the higher beings of their race had powerful intelligence. They tricked the universe into believing they were smarter before pulling off an insane stunt in the Giant Domain.

Unfortunately, this event was not known to the members of the Judgement Order, nor did it apply to them.

In the current situation, they could use their base understanding of the Nox, at least, for the most part.

Because they were younger generation geniuses.

Even the oldest among them didn't exceed 150 years in age, aside from Aishia, whose age was irrelevant, and their combined experience likely couldn't match a single one of the Executioners currently hunting them.

What did this mean?

Naturally, it meant they were the underestimated party.

Their intelligence was the one under question.

As long as it looked like they were trying their hardest to act a certain way, what reason did the Nox have to think they were doing something different?

These geniuses were not Damien Void.

They were not the genius who attracted the ire of a Nox Emperor at a young age due to his skills.

They were just his "associates."

"Do you understand now?" Su Ren asked as he slashed his strange mana into another High Commander before looking at Long Chen.

"Mm, we're useless because we're just the 'friends.' That's what they think."

"Right. The only value we possess to them is our information about Damien. Sister-in-law is abusing this fact to mislead them."

"Tch. Maybe I really am dumb."

"Is this something that needs confirmation?"

"Dammit."

Su Ren grinned while Long Chen shook his head annoyedly.

He was always walking right into these insults, wasn't he?

Nevertheless, the duo looked out ahead of them and collectively sighed.

"We've already made it this far, huh? Come to think of it, why didn't we just take this route?" Long Chen said.

They were staring past a transparent barrier separating them from the Ghostly Plains. They were already at the boundaries of this territory.

However, Su Ren merely grinned.

"Tell me, swordsman. Do you not wish for glory?"

Long Chen's eyes widened.

His lips curled into a smile, a defeated expression on his face.

"Haa, when you say it like that, what am I supposed to do?"

"Haha! Let us not mind it then! We have finished our task. It is time to return to the group."

"Mm. I guess it's only getting wilder from here."

The duo concealed themselves and began moving.

Just like them, the stronger groups didn't have much of a problem executing the task this time, especially those talented in stealth.

Rose's orders didn't just account for the plan, but her members as well.

She didn't separate them in a way where "weaker" groups would exist.

If someone was weaker in one facet, they would be paired with someone who could complement them and boost their efficiency.

This was a requirement she focused dearly on when she was first creating the Judgement Order.

Above all else, the members needed loyalty, heart, and synergy.

Her expert leadership led to a situation where their group didn't lose a single member during this phase of the plan.

Though, they couldn't do it without any obstacles.

Around half an hour after they started moving, their traces were discovered.

The hunting dogs would be upon them soon.

Chapter 1156 Operation [4]

The Nox enemies in this shadow army camp were definitely not as scheming as Rose, but they were just good enough to follow her plans for them perfectly.

The Judgement Order members spread in both directions from their original position and left traces that led to both periphery territories, which led to the following events progressing in such a way.

Valakos spotted a glint out of the side of his eye.

He immediately chased it down and landed on the ground, only to find nothing around.

A scan of his awareness offered no clues in the surroundings for unknown reasons, but he did get a ping from the ground below.

"Hm?"

He made a sound of curiosity as he used mana to clear the area.

'Traces of battle.'

Barely present mana fluctuations that had been covered after what was obviously a great amount of work appeared in his perception.

The meaning was obvious.

'These cunning brats!'

"Men, come!"

His voice boomed in the ears of nearby Nox, and several tens of them answered his call.

"Is this all of you?" He asked suspiciously.

"No, Sir. There are fifty more of us in the vicinity," a High Commander responded dutifully.

"Fifty...?"

Valakos frowned. If there were supposed to be more, more that he was unable to sense...

"These cunning brats move quickly. I will give them that much."

"Sir...?"

"Spread out and check for traces of battle. They will be hidden, but they should exist."

"Understood!"

The High Commanders moved by his command immediately, but that wasn't enough.

"Krato and the rest are still underground. How did they manage to fool us?"

High Commanders clearly weren't enough to do the job.

Unfortunately, Valakos didn't have the authority to command his fellow Executioners.

'I will start moving myself.'

He would join the fray.

"Let us see how long you can run."

Just like them, he understood the key point.

They could not escape from him if he was able to find them.

It was a game of cat-and-mouse.

Would strength win out?

Or would schemes show their worth?

With the passing of minutes, Valakos received information about the tracks that led to the Ghostly Plains and its fellow periphery territory, indicating only one thing.

'They split and decided to run away.'

What was he expecting from a group of children?

Of course they would only think to flee.

Nevertheless, it wasn't his problem anymore.

"Alert the surrounding camps. There are some rats coming their way."

No matter what they tried, they wouldn't be safe.

He wouldn't allow them such a privilege!

Well...

Valakos' efforts were definitely noble, but he was unfortunately on the wrong path entirely.

The journey to the rendezvous point this time was far easier, mainly because the Nox beings on the way had been cleared prior.

Currently, the Judgement Order stood at the very edge of the dark forest. Ahead of them was a large open plain on which the shadow army encampment was located.

The third step of their plan was simply termed "absolute concealment."

They were found last time because they were separated and exposed already.

When Rose used the distraction as an opportunity to blanket the entire group in her illusions again, they disappeared from any perception that could touch them at the moment.

Valakos wasn't able to find them with his search, nor would others be able to perceive them even if they walked directly through the spot they were standing!

The beauty of Rose's trickery didn't need to be explained further, because they weren't anywhere near finished yet.

Making it out of the dark forest was the easy part. They had an advantage once they grouped up and their enemies were dumb.

From this point on, no such thing existed.

"There are three Supremes and a Demigod in that camp. No matter what, we will not be able to avoid them," Rose said solemnly.

"The Supremes will sweep this plain with their awareness every so often due to their protocol. Our current goal is to make it into the camp."

"Once we get there..."

Once they got there, they were going to charge straight through everything until they reached their goal.

There was no other option!

Huu...

Rose deeply exhaled.

Things were going well so far, but she didn't like what that meant for the future.

This stretch of the trip was entirely on her. The rest would be relying on her concealment to keep them hidden from the gazes of those who could crush them with a single finger.

"Su Ren, Aishia, aid me with your perception. Don't spread your awareness outside my barrier, but if you sense anything intuitively, tell me immediately."

The duo nodded and came to the front.

Of the group, these two had the best natural perception. Aishia gained it from her status as a true-blooded Valkyrie, while Su Ren broke the limits of a human through the teachings of his master.

Slowly, the group moved forward.

1 step...2 steps...3 steps...

"Stop!"

Aishia spoke first, and they instantly halted.

A sweeping wave of domineering power spread past them like the pinging of a navigation device.

"Huu..."

"Huu..."

"Huu..."

They were under Rose's protection, but they all instinctively slowed their heart rates and calmed their breathing.

That was a terrifying sensation.

And to think it just came from a single Supreme's perception!

That kind of force was monstrous. It was common to say that Supremes could kill them with a single finger, but this power proved that to be a severe understatement.

A Supreme...

A Supreme could kill them with no more than a thought!

"Calm down. We haven't been detected."

Rose's words were firm, but her heart was shaking.

She realized something important.

They were fine when they were still, but if that Supreme was able to sense their movement somehow...

'Focus.'

She threw away her useless thoughts.

The outcome was death regardless, so there was no point thinking about whether or not it would happen early.

"Let's move."

10 steps...20 steps...50 steps...

They moved slowly for safety, not making any big movements so Rose could finely control the atmosphere.

The distance they needed to cover was almost a kilometer. Their current pace wasn't getting them anywhere.

However, moving faster wasn't an option.

"Huu...huu...huu..."

Rose could feel the sweat building on her brow.

The pressure of the situation combined with the absolute control she needed to have on her illusions was taxing on the mind.

The subtlest changes in wind, atmospheric pressure, temperature, and even subtle things like weathering that didn't show obvious effects for thousands of years had to be considered.

The perception she was facing could detect the slightest displacement in a single particle of grass hundreds of thousands of kilometers away.

Right now, that perception was concentrated in this one-kilometer radius because there were already troops protecting the area outside it.

No Supreme wanted to take on the lackey job willingly.

He was doing the bare minimum, sure, but concentrated range meant concentrated power.

A single atom being out of place could alert him.

How could Rose easily move while maintaining this control?

That perception passed by them every 10 minutes.

With their current speed, it would take at least an hour to reach the destination.

For the rest, it was like a horror movie, quietly tiptoeing past a beast of untold proportions.

But for Rose, this was a direct battle of even greater untold proportions.

A brutal challenge against the Nox Supremes, and against herself.

Chapter 1157 Operation [5]

Thud.

"Huu..."

Thud.

"Huu..."

Thud.

"Huu..."

VOOOOOOOOOM!

A representation of Rose's perception.

Hard footsteps that resounded like booming explosions despite their extreme softness, and the overbearing pressure of the awareness wave that passed by them every ten minutes.

She could sense her comrades nearby, but she couldn't pay much mind to them.

She could only see them as figures of mana, figures she had to track at an atomic level to completely erase from reality.

'Focus.'

She repeated the word every few minutes to keep herself on track.

Minutes passed like this.

Minute changes had to be performed every millisecond, and the group's movement speed couldn't slow any further lest they never reach their destination in the first place.

Rose's illusions had been inching closer and closer to being a reality of their own ever since she realized her path in the Severed World, but she wasn't able to grasp the true power of this art yet.

There would be a time when she didn't have to do all of this.

A time when she could "program" her illusions to update in real-time so they could never be told apart from reality.

However, she hadn't reached that point yet.

She couldn't program, she could only command.

Therefore, every step became a grueling journey of a thousand miles.

Every time her foot touched the ground, she felt a shock through her body as her perception updated based on the changed environment.

This effect was multiplied many, many times due to the various factors that changed due to the group's presence in the area.

If there was one thing going for her, it was that Eien's atmosphere, especially so far into its depths, was not quite stable in the first place.

It was constantly fluctuating, so even if she missed something, it could be explained away.

As long as she didn't miss anything that indicated man-made interference, that is.

Slow steps made slow progress, but slow progress was still progress.

In the first half hour, they were able to completely hide from the Supremes and reach the halfway point between the expansive field and the basecamp.

The members of Judgement Order didn't make a single sound in this time, as to not distract Rose in any way, and silently focused on moving in such a way where she wouldn't bear extra burdens.

Rose was the center of their group in ability and spirit. Even after doing such taxing work during this phase of the plan, she still needed to be battle-ready when it came time for the next.

Ximen Wuhen had already prepared a myriad of blessings that could be cast on a single thought to bring her back to peak condition, but it was hard to say what that kind of mental stress was actually doing to her mind.

It wasn't something simple.

On the outside, she was perspiring like she was running a marathon and had a dull haze of absolute concentration clouding her eyes, however, her mind was experiencing a much more severe consequence.

Hairline cracks spread through her spiritual world in the same way Damien experienced its shattering long ago.

The cause was the same.

Extreme stimulation that the mind couldn't bear.

Unbeknownst to her, Rose's actions were too far beyond her capabilities. She was doing something that should've been impossible for a period of time longer than any living being should have been able to do so.

She was doing as she swore with Ruyue and Elena in the Severed World.

She was not letting reality limit her ability.

Things began to change during the second half of the journey.

Rose's movements became more fluid, and her eyes returned just slightly to focus.

It felt like she could feel reality more literally. The fabric she felt brushing across her skin ever since that day of blessing, she felt like she could feel its individual seams and creases.

If she just touched them...

'Focus.'

Now wasn't the time.

Now, she had a mission to accomplish.

She couldn't allow her mind to wander into fantasy.

The group progressed and progressed.

They walked through the least yet most dangerous part of their journey thus far tensely, and eventually...

They reached their destination without a hitch.

It was an absolutely unexpected outcome.

"Huu..."

Rose exhaled again. Her breath was shaky, but she stood up with trembling legs and didn't allow it to bog her down.

"The next part...should begin...soon."

HONG!

HONG!

HONG!

As if on cue, an emergency bell rang through the encampment.

All available Nox left their tents and gathered in the main square, where the three Supremes were already waiting.

"We've received reports that the group of rats we've been chasing have fled to the neighboring camps," the Supreme in the middle spoke.

"We have the option to leave this to them, but..."

"Do any of you wish for that?"

The two to his sides finished his sentence.

"Never!"

"I want to rip them apart myself!"

"Don't let those fuckers steal out kills!"

The reaction of the troops was quite strong.

A group of juniors managed to evade them for so long; it was utterly shameful for their camp.

And if others managed to catch the prey that evaded them, or worse, if that prey managed to escape...

Unacceptable!

They would become clowns of their race, and more importantly, they'd be killed off for such shameful behavior!

"Good," the main Supreme said.

"Apparently, our Executioners are incompetent. Ryugo and Tirus will lead the lot of you to the other camps to hunt them. Do not disappoint us."

Ryugo and Tirus. According to assumptions, they were powerful forces under these three Supremes, however...

It turned out, these two were the Supremes themselves!

The two standing on the man's right and left stepped forward and began dividing troops.

And inevitably, a question arose.

"Sir, what about our camp?"

If all of their troops were going to be positioned elsewhere, what would happen to their camp?

The Supreme glanced at the Nox who spoke. He was a High Commander who didn't stick out from the crowd much, but he'd been pinpointed instantly.

"Tell me, do you think our camp has no security?"

"N-no, Sir!" The High Commander responded nervously.

"Exactly. As long as I am present...this place will never fall."

They were arrogant words, but they were not as lofty as they seemed.

After all, that man, Hans, was a Supreme above Supremes, a man just a single step away from Divinity, and a man who'd slaughtered countless enemies on the battlefield,

As long as he was present, it was truly impossible for the enemy to breach their camp.

Because the only type of enemy that could defeat Hans...

...was the type their Lord had the freedom to personally deal with!

Under the Judgement Order's gazes as they watched from the camp's periphery, the two supremes Ryugo and Tirus took their divided troops and left the base camp moving in opposite directions.

Meanwhile, Hans returned to his tent without another word.

Rose and the rest waited.

They waited silently without a single movement for almost an hour.

"..."

"...okay."

That was when Rose finally spoke.

"Everyone knows what comes next," she said, placing her hand against the ground.

"The second you sense my mana..."

The group around her prepped themselves. This was the deadly part,

"...run like your life depends on it."

VOOOOM!

Chapter 1158 Operation [6]

They were weak, but they were organized.

They had brains, but their opponents were so strong their only real strategy was running.

Running, running, running.

For the past several months, that's all they did.

And this was the final stretch.

The plan was still to run.

However, this time, there was a Supreme involved.

VOOOOOM!

The second Rose's hand touched the ground, mana swirled wildly in the atmosphere and created a field that encased the entire camp.

At that exact moment, everyone moved.

Long Chen, Su Ren, Ruyue, and Elena led the charge while Aishia and the rest of the leaders took the back line.

Meanwhile, the regular members stayed in the middle and determined the speed of the group.

None would get left behind.

Except Rose and Ximen Wuhen, who stayed behind on purpose.

Ximen Wuhen stood up with the rest and instantly cast every buff she'd been preparing on Rose, bringing her past her peak condition into an enhanced state of existence.

Afterward, she directed her mana at herself and did the same.

Rose's goal now was simple.

Using her illusions as a medium, she created a formation around the camp.

It spread and formed into a complex pattern within a second, far faster than an ordinary formation master could do the same, and whirled to life.

This was as much as they could do unhindered.

"Hahaha, so you truly decided to appear."

Hans' voice resounded through the camp.

He left his tent slowly, roughly 50 meters ahead of them, with a smile on his face.

"I expected nothing less."

Everyone's eyes went solemn.

It became clear that sending everyone away was precisely a move to bait them out, but it was too late to be flustered by this.

"It is time for you to die."

BOOOOOOOOOOM!

Was he going easy on them?

No, he was just toying with them.

Yet, even his definition of playing was sending them into a death trap.

The gargantuan explosion that rang out enveloped most of the camp and destroyed all housing except for the ones inhabited by Supremes and the Lord.

Chaotic mana waves flew wildly in every direction, knocking the rushing Judgement Order geniuses in every direction.

"Maintain formation! Keep going!" Su Ren yelled, brandishing his blade.

"Absolute Slash!"

Shiiiiing!

His muscles bulged and veins surfaced on his skin as he slashed vertically with all his power.

Greyish mana arced from his sword and cut through the mana before him, opening a path.

"Long Chen, Aishia, take the sides!"

"Xue siblings, Flamesworth, keep the backline! Nobody is allowed to retreat!"

"Sister-in-laws, we'll support you! Don't let him touch the leader!"

Su Ren rapidly distributed orders which were followed without hesitation.

Elena and Ruyue fell back and created several layers of defense around Rose, while the rest did their best to resist the explosion.

"Kuak...!"

"Agh!"

"Dammit! My arm!"

It was impossible to avoid injuries.

No matter how hard they tried, even this toying attack from a Supreme was insane.

Limbs flew threw the air before being crushed into meatpaste by the raging mana, cuts and gashes dug into everyone's bodies, and the more unlucky ones...

"AARGH!"

The first to die was a man named Peter. A justice-following man just like the rest of the group, he died unjustly fighting for his cause.

He was directly decapitated by a rogue mana flash, his life leaving him before he even realized what was happening.

Peter was the first.

That single rogue wave took five others after him.

"DAMMIT!"

Long Chen let out a furious roar.

The power of a dragon boiled to life in his bloodline and boomed into the atmosphere with his cry, dispersing a large portion of mana.

In the back, Xue Yue used ice to create massive blockades that shielded the group, and Xue Fang used similar icy mana to counter the wild mana. Together, they were able to fight with great efficiency which allowed them to perfectly hold the backline.

As for Atticus who joined them, his power was just as chaotic as the explosion. Lightning arced through the air and created a web that acted as a shield dome above the heads of the group, preventing any accidents like the first.

Aishia also didn't stand still. Spear in hand, she was a true Valkyrie in action, using brute force to break away the attacking energy.

"Haha, how nice. Looks like I can play for a while."

Those harrowing words reminded them.

Hans just looked at them to cause this scene.

Watching them struggle, this was his exact purpose in giving them something they could handle.

It was humiliating and discouraging. It made several people want to give up right then and there.

But they refused!

That very arrogance, the condescending gaze of someone who viewed themselves as superior; exploiting that attitude was exactly how they got this far!

If they gave up now, what was the point of everything else?!

"Death will not claim me until I deem her worthy!"

It started with one person.

A man named Greg. He was almost an unnoticeable presence amongst the greatness of his peers, but he managed to last until now regardless.

He said it to keep himself sane.

He said it to keep himself from running.

And the rest followed for the exact same reasons.

"Death will not claim me until I deem her worthy!"

"Death will not claim me until I deem her worthy!"

"Death will not claim me until I deem her worthy!"

The cries spread through the group until it became a chant.

BANG!

A targeted explosion wiped out ten at once. They had no chance of resisting.

The group moved forward regardless. Step by step, second by second, they moved.

"Death will not claim me until I deem her worthy!"

"Death will not claim me until I deem her worthy!"

"Death will not claim me until I deem her worthy!"

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Three more deathly bursts of mana. The first was blocked by Su Ren and then dispersed by Long Chen and Aishia.

The second bypassed them directly and struck the backline. The Xue Siblings and Atticus were able to divert most of its energy, but that strike claimed another two lives.

The third...

The third didn't attack the group at all.

It went over them and directly at Rose.

"Is she the one you wish to protect so fiercely? Then I shall kill her first."

Their blazing determination in the face of absolute power was annoying. Hans wanted to do something about it, but showing his emotions against these ants would only demean him.

So, he would just make them feel hopelessness before they died.

Now that they'd shown such spirit, he couldn't let them go without breaking it.

How else could he call himself a follower of the Inhuman Emperor?

BOOOOOOOOOOOM!

Ruyue and Elena gritted their teeth and faced the explosion head-on.

It was a bit different for them.

They were already in the process of escaping the bounds of reality.

Plus, the two of them realized something as they spent more time together.

Elena was absolute Yang and Ruyue was absolute Yin.

When they attacked in tandem...

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

...they were truly a force to be reckoned with.

Chapter 1159 Operation [7]

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

Pitch-black explosive mana met in the air with an opponent of yin and yang, creating a massive storm of energy that wrapped around the camp and razed anything in the vicinity.

A depression in the thickly packed rock around Rose, Ruyue, and Elena was formed several kilometers deep, but the island of land on which they stood remained untouched.

"Keuk...!"

"Ahh!"

Ruyue and Elena winced in pain but refused to move.

Rose was the most important person in this operation. No matter what happened, if she was interrupted, all of them were fated to die!

The yin-yang duo's strength did not match the level of a Supreme, but their combined power was just above that of a High Commander. When they faced this explosive burst that only contained a portion of the enemy's power, they were able to deflect it without taking much damage.

"Be careful. He's going to get worse from here."

Ruyue cued Elena in, understanding the behavior of men with oversized egos more than anyone else as someone who was raised by one, and prepared her mana again without hesitation.

"Go big this time?" Elena asked.

"We don't really have a choice," Ruyue responded in the same second.

"Tch. How annoying."

"This situation is too dire for annoyance, but, yes, I agree."

The duo exchanged glances and released their mana together.

As Elena had a singular specialization in Life, Ruyue's absolute Yin didn't completely synergize with her mana. To compensate, Ruyue used exclusively Death Mana in tandem with her sister, creating a beautiful blend of black and white in the air before them.

As they did so and the effects of the previous explosion cleared away, Hans' furious expression became clear.

It was not a matter of power. If it was, he could've killed everyone here in an instant.

But, though he had no qualms with using power to bully the weak, this was not a situation that allowed it.

Pride wasn't the only factor. When one became a Divinity and their Legend became a truly pronounced part of their existence, one needed to stay true to their desires to continue forward on the path they chose.

At his level, Hans was also subjected to this. He spent so long refining and defining the Divinity he was to inherit, and the identity it had was "Tyranny."

He didn't just want to suppress everything with absolute power, he wanted everyone under him to gaze at him in fear. He wanted to be absolute in their hearts before they died.

If the opponent was equal to him, such a thing could be accomplished through victory and torture, but for these ants who still dared to stand up to him despite the difference in power that should've inherently given them such an attitude, he needed to be more direct.

The longer they resisted, the more he wanted to just crush them.

But he held himself back.

That wasn't the satisfaction he desired.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Explosions of mana with no particular laws backing them rang out in every direction.

Even without laws, Hans could output power and complexity in his mana that simply couldn't be fathomed by these younger geniuses.

Yet, regardless of their incomprehension, they continued moving towards their goal.

They lost almost half of their people in the first few seconds of this interaction, and as more and more time passed, the death toll only increased.

Su Ren, Long Chen, and Aishia fought desperately in the front to block as much of the explosive force as possible, but the enemy didn't have problems bypassing their barriers.

It was the same with Atticus and the Xue Siblings.

The turtle shell made of stronger members couldn't protect the weaker ones.

Said weaker individuals also didn't desire protection.

They fought as well, using everything their mana and bodies allowed to help their leaders resist.

The wild energy in the atmosphere was amplified continuously. The brutal struggle continued.

In total, 35 people died thus far.

Blood splattered on Long Chen's face. His eyes were cold and cruel, filled with burning fury towards the enemy.

"DAMMIT!" He roared again.

He couldn't find the time or energy to say anything else. He only wanted to express the boiling rage within.

Su Ren and Aishia were quieter, but their thoughts weren't much different.

However, Rose was working.

As long as she could finish in—

"AHHHHHHH!"

A piercing scream came from the backline, sending shivers down their spines.

There, Hans, who hadn't moved until now, stood with Xue Yue dangling from his grasp.

"Did you consider yourselves important?"

He grinned cruelly.

"Did you forget your place?"

"Agh...ack...ghh..."

Xue Yue struggled in his grasp and tried to escape, but her every move made his claws dig deeper into her skin.

"Get your hands off her!"

Xue Fang appeared behind him, his sword already in motion.

"Xue Fang, retreat!"

Su Ren shouted hastily, but it was too late.

"Haha, what a touching sight."

Bang!

Hans merely waved his hand backward.

The physical force contained in this slight motion...

...tore Xue Fang apart.

"AAARGH!"

He roared in pain as his sword arm was blasted into shreds.

The entire right side of his body was bloodied, with chunks of his organs visible through the holes punctured through him.

"None of you can touch me."

Hans' body turned ethereal.

When he reappeared, he was already at Aishia.

Shiiing!

He swept his arm through the air again, and both of her legs were severed from her body.

"You are merely ants. Ants attempting to fell a lion."

BANG!

He clenched his fist.

That was it.

A terrifying shock spread through Xue Yue's body.

It wasn't enough for her to die.

Her entire body was exploded into blood mist that sprayed onto her comrades.

"SISTER!"

Xue Fang roared in pain.

He charged forward, ignoring his injuries, and summoned all his mana into his remaining arm.

"Again?"

Bang!

Before Hans could act, Su Ren intercepted and grabbed Xue Fang, throwing him several hundred meters away.

Of course, this meant he was subjected to the attack that would've killed the man.

"Khhhh...!"

Su Ren's durable body didn't fail him, but he couldn't say he didn't feel the pain.

A gust of wind. That's all that hit him.

Yet, he was internally bleeding from several organs.

This was not a good situation.

However, his eyes did not go to Rose.

None of theirs did.

Even if Hans had an inkling that she was plotting something, he didn't know how integral she was.

The second they showed him she was their last hope, it was over for them.

"You take me for a fool, don't you?" Hans commented grinningly.

"Did you think I didn't know?"

He flashed before Ruyue and Elena.

"The only reason I didn't touch her is because the Lord wants her."

Even if Rose couldn't be damaged too much, Ruyue and Elena could.

He couldn't kill them, sure, but torture was absolutely an option.

"Haha, I cannot wait to see the expression on that man's face when he comes to know of this. Will he rage, or will he crumble? To lose his people not to a great Emperor, but to me! Hahahaha!"

His heinous claws shot out.

Time seemed to move in slow motion.

From the safety of her position, Rose finally opened her eyes.

"Done."

Chapter 1160 Operation [8]

VOOOOOOOM!

The ground suddenly went alit with bright flashes of light.

Hans was pushed back by the sudden flux of mana, and Ruyue and Elena were able to use that split second of time to move out of his range.

The complex formation Rose began drawing no more than 30 seconds ago was finally finished.

30 seconds.

That was all the time it took for Hans to massacre most of their group.

Bzzt! Crackle!

Electric arcs zipped and zoomed through the camp.

"I'm sorry I was late," Rose said, standing up.

"But it's time to end this now."

The formation's light got more and more intense with every passing instant. It whirled and revolved, and furious waves of spatial mana flooded the area.

VOOOOM!

VOOOOM!

VOOOOM!

It was at a level where even Hans was forced to block the chaotic spatial waves instead of focusing on his targets.

Rose smiled.

"It's time for you to meet death."

Bzzt!

BZZZZZT!

The crackling electricity suddenly went haywire.

Rose's expression paled.

Was it...malfunctioning?

"No, it's not that."

The voice who answered her unspoken thought was strange. Unfamiliar, yet so dearly close.

"I just hijacked it for a bit. I don't know who your original target was, but I'm better than them anyway."

"WHO?!"

Hans finally reacted to the strange voice, snapping the rest out of their dazes as well.

"Who am I?"

The formation's light swirled madly and concentrated in the very center of the base camp, where the Nox's summoning formation was located.

"Didn't she just tell you?"

The shadow of a man appeared in its midst.

As the light cleared, the confusion of those present only intensified.

Standing there was a tall, robust man with flaming red hair. He was shirtless, showing off his chiseled body and massive muscles, and otherwise wore casual, baggy clothes like a common wanderer.

His eyes were the color of blood, and the flames dancing in them only exemplified his appearance.

He grinned wildly, his gaze settled on Hans.

"I'm death."

Nobody saw what happened next.

Hans disappeared from where he stood, and that man replaced him.

BOOOOOOOOOOOM!

A terrifying rumbling resounded from several tens of kilometers away.

A dust cloud swept into the air.

Was that...

Did Hans just get thrown?

"I know you have a lot of questions, but I can't really answer them, so..."

The man glanced around the group.

The majority of them were missing limbs. That majority was far outnumbered by the corpses on the ground.

And the blood painting all of their bodies...

His eyes turned cold.

"I'm going to make that guy experience everything he did to you."

BANG!

The man disappeared into the distance, leaving the stunned Judgement Order survivors where they were.

"That guy..." Elena muttered.

Rose and Ruyue nodded.

"He's exactly like Damien."

His attitude was one thing, but for these three women, that was only a surface-level observation.

What they felt was a sensation in their souls.

That this strange man and their husband had some sort of connection they couldn't comprehend.

Though, they weren't given the time to contemplate.

BANG!

Within a minute, "something" crashed in the area before them.

When the dust cleared, that thing's identity became clear—

BANG!

—well, not so much anymore.

The red-haired man landed on top of Hans' crumpled body with so much force the impact dug a crater several hundred kilometers into the ground.

Hans and that man disappeared into the darkness of that hole, but the sounds of their battle resounded so clearly it was a miracle they weren't projecting the sound.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

"AAAAAARGH!"

BANG!

"STOP!"

BANG!

"THIS!"

BANG!

"NOW!"

BOOOOOOOOOOM!

A black blur shot high into Eien's sky, a red one following soon after.

BANG!

Hans' body was slammed into the ground again, and the red-haired man once again followed.

However, this time, he didn't make such a powerful move.

He landed next to Hans and pushed his arm out.

BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!

All four of his extremities were torn from his body.

It was an injury even Nox regeneration couldn't heal.

"So...?"

The red-haired man looked around the Judgement Order group.

"Didn't you want revenge?"

Their hearts instantly blazed to life.

Revenge...

They'd lost so many people. They'd been in a situation where revenge couldn't even be considered.

But now that it was being offered to them...

"REVENGE!"

"REVENGE!"

"REVENGE!"

...how could they refuse?

The common members instantly crowded Hans' body, stabbing into and ripping apart his flesh with everything they had.

They knew he wouldn't die, but that's what made it worth the effort.

Xue Fang joined as well.

He limped over with half his body intact, his eyes dull yet filled with hatred.

"You...killed her..."

His last remaining direct family.

His dear sister whom he cherished so much.

She was dead.

And for what?

"YOU KILLED HER!"

He roared like a madman as he joined the crowd. He didn't care what he looked like, nor did he care about exerting himself at all.

Even if he died here, as long as he got revenge, he was content.

Rose, Ruyue, Elena, Long Chen, Su Ren, and Aishia watched quietly.

Ximen Wuhen had no presence until this point and continued to remain behind Rose, silently providing the grieving members with buffs to help them act without reservations.

"It's not over yet."

Rose didn't want to interrupt the current events, but it had to be known.

"We came here for him."

Her eyes went to the tent at the very back of the camp, the only area left standing after the previous clash.

"Ah, that guy?" The red-haired man said.

"Don't you think there's a reason he never left his tent?"

He didn't grin due to the severity of the situation, but the amusement in his eyes couldn't be hidden.

"Come here."

He beckoned with his finger, and a figure came flying out of the tent.

"Introduce yourself."

He held a man by his throat. The man had the head of a dog and the strong bronze body of a pharaoh.

The aura of Divinity could be sensed obviously from him, but...

Why did he look so weak in front of that man?

"What...are you?"

The Hound Lord, whose reputation preceded him in terrifying the masses, asked in an almost whimpering tone.

"Who am I?" The man said again.

"I don't feel like repeating myself, but you get the point. Just shut up and die."

"YOU CAN'T!"

"Oh, but I can."

The red-haired man gripped his fist, a motion mirroring Hans from a few moments ago.

CRASH!

The sound that echoed through the camp was not an expected one.

It was like glass shattering.

Something...something changed.

The Hound Lord...

Why did he feel so weak?

"This is quite the useful skill," the red-haired man said nonchalantly.

"Ah, you must be curious..."

"Well, it's nothing much. To put it simply, I just shattered his Divinity."

Hans was not dead, but he might as well have been. His death was only a matter of when the Judgement Order was finished enacting their revenge.

As for the Hound Lord, his body wrinkled and shrunk. He looked like someone who hadn't had a proper meal in decades.

What was this situation?

Just a few seconds ago they were all fated to die, yet, now...

Because of a single unknown entity, their fates were utterly reversed.