

# Void 1161

Chapter 1161 Operation [9]

Were things supposed to get worse from here?

The truth was: yes, yes they were.

In a place like Eien, in the deepest depths of Nox territory, surrounded by enemies on all sides, making this much noise would draw numerous enemy forces to their location without fail.

However, this didn't happen.

It wasn't that the Nox didn't come, but every single one that did...simply died.

There was an invisible dome around the basecamp area that blocked out any intruders. Whoever crossed this barrier would turn to ash without a single word of complaint.

It was the power of that man.

That strange man who still hadn't given his name didn't speak much.

He acted like a statue, holding the Hound Lord without killing him and allowing the younger generation around him to let out their feelings in peace.

"Who are you?" Su Ren asked, finally breaching the subject.

They couldn't stay silent forever, nor could they accept this kind of grace from an unknown entity. It was impossible to tell one's intentions in this brutal universe, and favors cost far more than lives.

"Ah, I'm—"

"—you can call me Alexander."

The man stopped himself quickly and finally gave his name.

"Do you know us?" Su Ren asked again.

"Do I...? Yes, but no. It's a little hard to explain, but it's not something you need to concern yourself. I'm not someone with bad intentions."

"Nobody has ever said that statement believably," Elena sneered.

"Haha, that's true! But, I'm serious. I really don't have any reason for coming here besides helping out with this."

The man named Alexander spoke with clear eyes indicating truth, but it was hard to trust him.

Nobody with such power could be moved easily!

No, this kind of person was a unique existence in the entire universe.

Didn't he feel a Demigod as a lower existence?!

The Hound Lord's state was such that he would die with a single touch of Alexander's pinky. If he wanted to, that Demigod would've long been dead.

Someone who could accomplish this kind of impossibility casually, someone who had this power yet still remained unknown in the universe...

This kind of person was dangerous.

Alexander seemed to understand the group's suspicions, as he raised his arms innocently.

"Haa, I won't try to get friendly, so don't worry. My business is over, so I'll take my leave."

He threw the Hound Lord's body on the ground in front of Rose.

"This isn't my kill. I'll let you have him."

Rose frowned as she gazed at it.

"Why?"

The question was obvious. They still didn't know this man, yet he was acting like they were people he absolutely had to satisfy.

"Hmm..."

Alexander scratched his head awkwardly and furrowed his brows in thought.

"I can't..."

"Well, let's just say the Judgement Order's biggest fan sends their regards."

He grinned, and before anyone could ask another question, he vanished.

He never needed a formation to come here in the first place.

The air was silent.

The dome around the camp didn't subside after Alexander left, but it was showing signs of destabilizing within the next few minutes.

Hans' body was now nothing more than a puddle of ink. It only took a single spark of fire to bring death upon him.

However, before anyone could move, Ruyue took over.

"Let me handle this."

The group cleared out, giving her space.

She raised her arms to her sides and summoned a large flow of mana that remained concentrated on the inky remains.

"An eye for an eye, a soul for a soul."

She didn't have a close relationship with Xue Yue. They could've been considered enemies at one point.

But regardless, Ruyue didn't have much family remaining in this world, especially not those worth being acquainted with.

Xue Yue just started showing her growth.

And now she was dead.

It didn't show on the outside, but she felt the impact of her death in her soul.

"Xue Yue deserves a new beginning, therefore, she will be reborn beautifully. However..."

Her eyes were cold.

"You do not deserve such privileges."

Deathly Yin overtook all. The atmosphere became eerie, the temperature dropping several tens of degrees into the negatives.

The Reaper of Souls, an underworld ruler of legend, appeared behind Ruyue menacingly, a figure in a hooded cape that flowed into oblivion.

Hans' remains were already starting to reform.

Pieces of his head and body could be seen stitching themselves together within the ink.

However, this was only for the better.

"This corrupted soul; you know what to do with it, right?"

[Hmmm...!]

The Reaper sighed domineeringly.

He became visible in Hans' newly reformed eye.

An eye he wished he never regenerated.

A shadowy claw made of pure death sunk into his remains, reaching past the physical into a plane only visible to Divinities.

He gripped "something" in his hand.

"AAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHH!"

Hans screamed in agony.

The Reaper paid it no mind. He slowly pulled his arm away, separating that "something" from Hans' body.

"AHHHHHHHHHHHHH!"

His incessant screams were haunting...

...hauntingly pleasant to those he tormented.



Hans' soul was separated from his body.

His screaming died down. His regeneration stopped as well.

After all, there was nothing left of Hans in that body.

It was just a husk.

"Hans" was...

SPLAT!

...crushed.

His soul was ripped into a thousand pieces and forced to endure unspeakable agony before it was completely erased from existence.

That soul would never experience rebirth.

At the same time, Rose borrowed Yggdrasil's Branch from Elena and held it in the air.

"This is why we fight," she said darkly.

"Today, we lost our comrades, our brothers and sisters, because of our weakness. This tragedy will never be forgotten. It will be carved into our souls for the rest of eternity."

The surviving members of the order, a measly number compared to their beginnings, looked at Rose with quivering eyes filled with rage and solemnity.

"However, we will not stop. I will not stop. This loss has reminded us of the reason we fight. To prevent such a thing from happening again, we cannot stop fighting."

"Carelessness will only kill us, but weakness will slaughter everyone we care for and wish to protect."

"So I will stand tall and follow this impossible path until the day I can no longer stand. Until the day life can no longer tolerate my presence, I will fight!"

SHIK!

Rose gritted her teeth, flames alit in her eyes, and stabbed through the Hound Lord's heart.

Just as Ruyue did, in a much less flashy manner, she eradicated the Hound Lord from existence.

The air was silent for a moment.

But the Judgement Order was not a flimsy group.

"I will fight."

"As will I."

Elena and Ruyue spoke up first.

"Allowing bastards to run wild isn't my style. I will also fight."

"Mm, you are talking like someone else right now, aren't you? Though, your courage is admirable. I will naturally be fighting as well."

"Mm, there's no turning back now."

Long Chen, Su Ren, Aishia...

One by one, from the leaders to the members, those who called themselves the Judgement Order voiced their solidarity, their will to pick up their arms.

"Good."

Rose nodded contentedly.

"Then...let us return home. We need to give our heroes a proper burial."

It was taxing.

It had to have been almost a year since they came to the shadow army.

But now wasn't the time to rest.

They needed to keep moving for the people who were forced to rest in their place.

Making it back to Heaven's Army.

That was the start.

Chapter 1162 Operation [10]

Compared to Hans and the surprise arrival of Alexander, the journey back was a light stroll through the park.

They only needed to conceal themselves. There was no need to worry about being discovered anymore.

Those Supremes who left for the nearby camps didn't come back. Not even once.

At first, they thought it was just a matter of time, but they were once again proven wrong.

The most likely case was that they'd been killed by Alexander before he left, but they couldn't be sure.

And they didn't have the energy to make sure.

Instead, they focused their energy together to escape the shadow army.

Rose was naturally still the center with her illusion power, but the rest didn't slack.

If an enemy could be killed silently, they were killed without fail. And if Rose ever felt taxed or needed aid, there were several people ready to provide her their mana and replenish her stamina through a variety of magics.

Still, the distance they needed to cover wasn't small.

In the first place, the shadow army was located near the boundary between Eien and the Abyss. It was separated from the main territories of the ring by a wall of illusory shadows that concealed it naturally, and it wasn't easily accessible to anyone.

If not for this, it wouldn't have been such a dangerous mission to infiltrate this area.

Nevertheless, their skills could get them in, so they could naturally get out.

The Executioner Valakos and his minions were left in the dark forest, only now becoming aware of the terror that enveloped their main camp.

The fury and humiliation they'd feel when they realized what happened could only be imagined, because at this time, Rose and the rest were far past their location.

The journey took a little over three months, and was only elongated by the constant stopping they did to slaughter the Nox on the way.

After all, the further they got from the camp, the weaker their enemies got.

Another method to quench their burning desires for vengeance revealed itself through this massacre, and they did not shy away from abusing it.

Eventually, they skillfully passed through the shadow wall, finally arriving back in universe territory.

The Blood-Drenched Wilderness was cleared of any Nox influence by Commander Huo's soldiers several months ago, so there were no more enemy forces in the vicinity.

The plain was now filled with Heaven's Army bases, to the point where it seemed a bit extreme.

The area would absolutely remain impenetrable by the Nox with this kind of protection, but...

The Judgement Order didn't stop at any of these extra bases and rapidly made their way directly to the main fortress.

After dismissing the lower members to rest, Rose took the leaders to Commander Huo.

There was much to report.

The old man's quarters were in the same place they always were, and he was hunched over his desk the same as always as well.

His vision raised when he sensed their presence.

'Nine...'

He sighed to himself, but didn't speak, beckoning them in.

"Commander," Rose said, saluting.

The rest followed before she continued.

"We have returned from the shadow army. The information collected has been collected into this jade slip. I suggest you look over it as soon as possible."

"Mm," Commander Huo hummed, taking the slip.

As he scanned his consciousness over it, his eyes became increasingly wide.



The general schematics of a shadow army base camp, the troop allocation, secret plans for invasions on different areas, news that a Demigod and a Supreme were dead, and two more Supremes were potentially dead as well...

Even the last piece couldn't be the most surprising piece of knowledge.

That spot belonged to—

"The Giant Domain."

"Yes. That is their true target. Have moves already been made to counter them?"

Commander Huo sighed.

"It's too late."

"Too...late?"

The commander nodded sorrowfully.

"The Giant Domain is gone. It vanished into thin air two weeks ago, and the remaining space turned into a piece of the chaotic Abyss."

Information that struck their souls.

An entire domain was just...gone?

How could that be?

No, if they came earlier, perhaps...!

"Do not have stray thoughts. Even a Demigod squad was sent to investigate the phenomenon, and despite their findings, we were not able to find a solution. The domain was forsaken by the higher authorities after being deemed 'unsalvageable.'"

"Then—"

"However, it is not all bad news."

Commander Huo's eyes warmed slightly.

"Although I did not know your group was the cause, the death of the Hound Lord spread a month prior. Investigative forces were sent into the Shadow Army, and it has been determined that every Nox encampment on the Soul World boundary has been eradicated. There is not a single enemy remaining."

The group's eyes widened.

That deed could only be attributed to a single individual.

A mysterious red-haired man named Alexander!

He didn't just kill the Nox Supremes, he killed everyone in the camps they had been visiting!

"I am aware that you have much more you wish to do, but calm those flames for now. Take rest and recuperate. After an event like this, overwork can be fatal."

Rose nodded, looking at the weary faces that those around her were trying to hide.

"Then, we will visit you again in 3 days."

The group began to leave, with Elena giving one last bow to her mentor before following.

Left alone, Commander Huo's sighs only became drearier.

They just got back.

There were only nine left of their most powerful, so he couldn't imagine what happened to their followers.

At a time like this, they didn't need to know.

'The situation is bleak.'

The information they brought only worsened a bad situation, but this was for the better since information gave an opportunity to counterattack.

Nevertheless, the current universe...

If one took the perspective of an invisible camera, one that existed outside the bounds of reality, one could infinitely zoom out to see a picture of the entire universe.

It was huge, far too huge for the human mind to comprehend, and its shape was far from regular.

Like bubbles put together in a strange chemical compound-like pattern, some domains were bordered by the Abyss, while others like the Divine Realm and Infernal Realm were lucky to be landlocked by their neighboring sectors.

The universe never maintained a proper shape for long, always shifting at an imperceptible level, but some laws were never broken, such as the secure position of the aforementioned Sectors.

Grand Heavens Boundary changed its appearance many times in the past.

The universe known to those alive today once had nine Sectors.

The first major change took place when the Elven Domain was ruined.

Its people were slaughtered and its single survivor was still missing.

The second came with Eden, which faced an equally cruel fate of total extermination.

There was no life left there. Even those worlds left behind were dark and dead.

And then came the third.

The Giant Domain disappeared and the space it occupied was swallowed by the Abyss.

And before this disaster could even pass...

The Beast Domain began experiencing the same fate.

Chapter 1163 Talent [1]

The Beast Domain wasn't quite as developed as its peers.

It wasn't a matter of strength or anything of the sort. It was an unequivocal fact that the Beast Domain possessed more than enough strength to be revered, which was why they hadn't been targeted until now.

However, Beasts didn't have a forgiving culture.

The law of the jungle that became a metaphor for the atmosphere of society came directly from their inherent culture, and this law didn't change at a universal scale.

If one lost, one would die. If one spared their enemy, one would be regarded as weak and they'd likely fall to revenge in the future.

When such a law prevailed, it was difficult to keep a large number of powerful people around at the same time.

The difference between the Beast Domain and the other Sectors was this.

Rather than a large quantity, they had limited quantity with extreme quality.

Their experts had strength that couldn't be matched by many, and most of the Beast Domain's conflicts were internal as others refused to get involved with such crazy people.

After all, if one lost the conflict, they wouldn't be safe even if they retreated!

There were more than a few stories of beasts chasing their enemies to the ends of the earth for the sake of redemption.

This environment was nothing more than a concentrated microcosm of the wider universe, so there were never problems.

If the beast experts could hold the lines on their own with power that matched an army, they wouldn't find problems from external influences either.

The Nox didn't begin their attack recently.

This was the start of the current war, but as had been found over time, the Nox's interference in the universe started several hundred million years ago, a time before recorded history.

The races dominant in their currently existing systems were those who survived the age-old storm.

The fact that they remained dominant to this day was a testament to their strength, if nothing else.

Therefore, it became clear that the Beast Race had several ways to repel invaders.

Then, why?

Why did they end up in their current situation?

It started 3 months ago in the universal timeline, not long after the Hound Lord was purged.

Unknown to the Judgement Order, news of his death spread starting that same day.

Nox forces arrived on the second day to confirm it, but his death was felt by the many Lords under the Inhuman Emperor's regime at the moment it happened, and realizing that a Demigod had died so quietly, they changed their plans.



Originally, the Soul World was their next target.

As those strategizing for Heaven's Army predicted, the Nox did indeed find a way to circumvent the natural disadvantages they had in the domain of Spirits.

If everything went according to plan, they would've used the full force of their strength and numbers to charge the frontlines guarding the Sector and make their way in somehow.

Even if only a few of them made it, they'd shown clearly they had ways to destroy a Sector with just a small group of invisible soldiers.

Yet, the Hound Lord's death was significant.

It had to be known that the number of Demigod casualties until this point of the current war was 0. None of the currently existing experts had died to this conflict.

The Hound Lord was the first blood, and the universe was the one that took it.

The Beast Domain was the next logical step.

No, the Human Domain was, at least in the Nox's eyes.

They, by no fault to them, believed that the natural barrier around the domain had weakened with them.

However, the Human Domain was special.

First of all, Damien's actions in No Return Pass had spread through the Nox armies over the past year and a frontal assault through Eien was taken off the table.

Even if they were able to kill him, by the time they did so, the universe would've been long aware of their movements and formed countermeasures to stop them.

Secondly, the barrier that was supposed to be weak was nothing of the sort.

It was almost as strong as it was when it was first created, a phenomenon with no explanation.

Regardless of the reason behind it, the fact remained that the Human Domain was far too difficult to conquer. At a time like this, when momentum was the most important factor, they couldn't allow the universe a chance to retaliate.

The beasts had many great clans led by the Golden Dragon Clan. The recently added Black Dragon Clan was also a powerhouse force that couldn't be underestimated.

However, in terms of actual experts, they were currently lacking.

The Golden and Black Dragon Clans lost a large number of their more powerful experts in their personal war, which dropped their usable combat power. On top of that, the forces under them were in similar circumstances due to similar circumstances.

As mentioned earlier, the Beast Domain's culture was ruthless, and this ruthlessness had now come to stab them in the back.

The Nox attacked with their everything.

The armies of the Inhuman Emperor, complete with several hundred million lesser Nox and several tens of millions of their Higher counterparts, charged as if their lives depended on it, with no particular strategies in mind.

Several worlds fell to their sudden actions before anyone realized it, and worst of all, they were extremely prepared.

Every Supreme was blocked by an equal, and the Demigods who had to find a way to help without directly interfering were stumped without a way to fix the situation.

Universal forces flooded into the domain to counter them, and the entire Sector became a war zone, similar to Calypto.

And...

They came back.

The terrifying starships that could destroy planets with a single strike of their cannons came back in full force.

In 3 months, the conflict couldn't progress much, but the Nox were definitely winning.

And as the months passed, this situation didn't improve, mainly because of a single factor.

Another strange situation that couldn't be explained.

Universal denizens began converting into Nox.

Not willingly, but spontaneously as if they were combusting.

When trust became a privilege, an army's morale was hard to determine.

With the passing of time, a small crack in the glass ballooned into something irreparable.

By the time a year went by, only Beast Emperor Star remained untouched.

But, that was a story for another time.

Whether it was now or then, it was hard to determine whether the downfall the universe was experiencing was a product of their enemies, themselves, or something greater.

However, it was certain that the Nox didn't gain such a pronounced advantage on their own.

The universe always had a problem with infighting. It was inevitable when its inhabitants had the privilege of free thought.

For benefits, for survival, or for some other inexplicable reason, there wasn't a small number of people who acted against the universe's best interest.

Unfortunately, this wasn't a problem that could be solved unless martial law was imposed.

And if martial law was imposed, those rebellious individuals could exploit the situation to attain a moral high ground and gather others to their cause!

It was difficult.

How could this problem be solved?

How could the universe's people be brought together so they could achieve survival for their homeland, even if it meant they themselves had to die?

This impossible problem was imperative to solve.

Otherwise, there really was no hope at all.

Chapter 1164 Talent [2]

Day: 735

Kill Count: 210,000,000,000

Damien no longer needed to go to the frontlines himself.

His body clock marked the passing of 2 years, and in the past 370 days, he'd both perfected and mastered the technique of perfect cloning.

It was a simple matter, yet the most complex comprehension Damien had to grasp in his entire life.

After all, the answer was not in the clones themselves, but in the Void.

Damien realized one thing about the Void.

This entity absolutely had sentience.

It wasn't the kind of sentience a human possessed, but something greater and lesser at the same time.

It could be considered similar to the system.

The Apeiron Records had consciousness, but did not have feelings or free will. It was an entity with a single task, and its entire sentience was based around completing this task with no extra parts.

The Void, on the other hand, had complete control of its free will and could act as it liked, as seen by the several times it decided to stop helping Damien to test him, but its sentience was similarly lacking the fundamental component known as "ego."

The Void was the Void. Its sentience could not speak or think, but it had a will to exert for a specific purpose that Damien was yet to understand.

Therefore, when wielding its power, one didn't need to intrinsically understand every small detail as one did for a concept like Universal Law.

It was a matter of connecting with the Void. If the Void could understand his intentions, it could carry out anything he wished to happen.

There was no limit to this power.

The only limit was Damien himself.

Damien had been taking steps towards the Void for several years now, even diverting the focus he put towards his primary Laws for this purpose, but he barely scratched the surface.

Whenever he made great strides, it was because the Void itself aided him in doing so, with his personal comprehensions rarely reaching such grand conclusions.

He could easily define the Void in terms he knew, but those terms were too broad.

"Everything and nothing at all at the same time, the supreme power that is at the foundation of all things."

What could that be called?

Existence was all humanity understood. Nonexistence was a concept brought about by the observation of existence and thus represented everything that couldn't be understood.

These two abstractions, these grand words that Damien's mind inherently used to comprehend the Void...

Weren't these the hidden elements he'd recently learned about? The things that separated the Void from what he understood?

This was his first great realization.

The fact that "everything within the bounds of reality, and everything outside of it" was still beneath the Void.

That put this entity in a position that the human mind had no possibility of defining.

Because what else was there?

What could be greater than that?



It was titled the Void on its own, not due to the intervention of another force, but what was the energy above both existence and nonexistence?

As Damien pondered this, he slowly uncovered more and more about the Void.

No, rather, he built a connection with it like it was a living being rather than a concept.

And this allowed him to master what he'd been struggling with for so long.

That happened at the 7-month mark.

After gaining the ability to create a clone, all Damien had to do was practice until he perfected it.

In the remaining 4 months of the year, he tried and failed dozens of thousands of times before he finally got a grip on the process.

From there, it was just a matter of repetition.

The current Damien could create as many clones as his mana would allow, and each of them could be granted strength equivalent to a percentage of his strength.

He could share their sight, and even possess the body of a clone for a short period of time if he wished to. It was almost as if he'd actually created Avatars.

Naturally, he had to deal with the natural limitations of this technique. Not every clone could possess his full power, and none of them could tap into the Void's abilities.

They also severely strained his spiritual world since he had to maintain a mental connection with each and every one to keep them operational.

Yet, to deal with the current situation, these clones were more than enough.

Tens of thousands of Damians populated No Return Pass. During idle times, they were like statues, motionless and without an ounce of life.

But when enemies came...

Well, it could be imagined what kind of catastrophe an army of Damien's would be, even without the Void.

What was surprising was that even the 4th class Higher Nox could be dealt with by these clones for the most part.

Those who were too strong would naturally meet Damien's true form, since he was always willing to entertain a good fight, but the rest were thrown away without mercy by his minions.

The only other time Damien took the time to visit the battlefield personally was to Devour the remains the Nox left behind.

Now, he had free time.

Not free time to sit and wallow about his situation; he wasn't so weak as to break down because of things like this anymore.

This was free time to get stronger.

SKREEEEEEEE!

SKREEEEEEEE!

SKREEEEEEEE!

One thing that never changed was the incessant screeching that made one's ears bleed and one's veins pop from annoyance.

It was obviously a mental warfare tactic, but Damien treated it like white noise nowadays.

Plus, though it didn't have much effect, feeling the experience pouring into his body was great. At least these screeches had changed from a tactic to a true representation of the torture his enemies were receiving.

'Never mind. Focus.'

Damien shook away his thoughts, suppressing them with the Mind Prison, before returning to the task at hand.

He held several balls of differently colored light in his hand.

Of them, one was black with hints of white, flickering strangely, while the rest were bright, beautiful blue, pale green, earthy brown, and a more jade-like sparkling green.

These were only the ones he was holding now, but those he'd been practicing with were far more.

Fire, water, wind, earth, wood, lightning, light, darkness...

Damien wanted to master every foundational element this universe had to offer.

'The Void's processes are difficult to grasp, but trying to do so is putting the cart before the horse. If I want to get where I want to be, I need to focus on the basics.'

Damien always had a problem with rushing. The Blessing of Foundation only had so much effect because he'd been rushing through any and everything he'd done until that point.

He wouldn't be so foolish any longer.

The system gave him the roadmap when he was still a teenager with nothing to his name.

The five elements, life and death, space and time, creation and destruction, and...

'Existence and Nonexistence that stand above them all.'

It left that part out for the Damien who would only be overloaded by such information, but now that he knew it, the puzzle made complete sense.

He had Spacetime and he had Samsara.

He had control over lightning, fire, and water, but he'd ignored those elements until now. He never tried to delve into the wood element since he already had life, and the others never even entered his eyes.

This was the start of his problem.

Yes, they meant nothing in front of his power.

But that didn't make them less important.

As long as he wished to fulfill his grand ambition, he needed to bring these forces up to par and match them to his power level rather than ignoring him.

Thus, his task for the remaining time he had in No Return Pass changed.

The black and white Heavenly Lightning, the Void Flame he refused to raise, and the absolute control of water he was granted by the Azure Dragon; these were his foundation.

These were the elements he possessed already.

Mastering them was just a matter of effort.

The rest...

He needed to find the way.

He needed to completely figure out how to transmute the Void into any Law he wished to use, so he could eventually become its indisputable sovereign and controller!

Chapter 1165 Talent [3]

Elemental abilities were the most commonly used of the powers available to those in Grand Heavens Boundary.

After all, compared to other, more elusive laws, the elements were far more easily accessible.

Affinities were assigned by birth, and aside from some special cases, they were the determiners of one's path from that point forth.

How could just anyone be born close to a Higher Law?

There were so few spatial practitioners, life practitioners, yin practitioners, or illusion practitioners in the universe that Damien's party suddenly became an anomaly that made no sense whatsoever.

But this could just be amounted to Damien's luck and propensity towards the hypertalented.

In terms of people he'd met throughout his life, those who resided in this universe were mostly elemental practitioners, including great geniuses like Atticus.

The commonality made elemental research something the universe was greatly advanced in. The amount of information on how to progress, the different paths one could take, and several other factors was astonishing.

Damien was now trying something that hadn't been done before, but this research was still highly valuable to him.

The Void Flame, which evolved from his previous Sunfire when he combined it with a Heavenly Flame, was something he attained through his means as a Celestial.

Meanwhile, his lightning was acquired even more unnaturally before it was twisted into something completely different through the devouring of a force as esoteric as Heavenly Lightning.

The Azure Dragon's water abilities were the same.

Damien had little to no understanding of how to go about comprehending the base elements naturally, but he trusted his intuition.

The first step was to create them, to find the affinities.

Controlling them with the Void was the final step he aimed for, but strangely enough, it was also his starting point.

The light balls floating on his hand were created through the Void. They were the most basic forms of the elements he wished to comprehend, dumbing down to the point where a classless practitioner could grasp their usage.

'Hmm...'

As he watched those balls floating on his palm, he removed excess elements like lightning from the equation and suppressed his unique variants so they would return to their base forms.

'It's all about harmony. I can just use the same principles as always to decipher them. It's a matter of balancing five instead of two.'

It was easy to have a difficult comprehension session where nothing was gained. This was the most common ending for such practice anyway.

But since when was Damien someone who procrastinated?

He wasn't going to patiently wait for comprehensions to come to him.

The only beneficial part of building the fundamentals after becoming an expert was one's knowledge.

The knowledge they gained from their time training, and the intuitive processing they could do because of the experience they possessed.

Damien had long since understood the concept of harmony, a close relative of the "Universal Flow" that had been following and guiding him his entire life.

Space and Time existed on equal and opposite planes. They were the same, yet so far separated.

Life and Death would refuse to cooperate when they met, clashing and creating conflict, but Damien brought them together to form their true nature as Samsara.

What was different this time?

The five elements had a cycle of their own, and when more variants and different types of elemental laws were added, this balance never broke, it merely changed its proportion.

Damien played around with the light balls, changing their configuration several times.

Light and Darkness had far more value than their peers, so when they swirled into the circle, everything was shaken.

The light balls of other elements shrunk under their umbrella and created a secondary cycle, almost like a moon orbiting a planet with Damien as its sun.

Lightning was a variant attached to Fire in the same way Ice was to Water. Meanwhile, Metal held status equal to Wood, but tended to be excluded from more conventional systems due to the rarity of the affinity.

It was fun to watch the light show. The way these elements reacted to each other when he tweaked them, the minute aggressions and joys they showed when in contact with their peers; the more he gazed at this tiny representation of what he was trying to create, the more it looked like—

'—a galaxy.'

It wasn't quite that big yet, but at its current size, it wasn't strange to call it a budding galaxy, a collection of planetary systems.

If its higher counterparts were added, wouldn't this puzzle fit his description perfectly?

It was wondrous how many patterns existed in this world.

All things were created equal. At the very base of all of these elements, weren't they the same? Weren't they all pillars supporting the universe's flow?

Nothing was different.

'That's right. Nothing is different.'

Was it supposed to be difficult to comprehend?



He thought so at first, but now, his mind was in a different place.

Damien sat down and concentrated, dismissing the light balls he was holding.

'I understand the base concept. Now I need to go one by one and seize control. First off...'

'Light.'

His wife was a Valkyrie. He was more than familiar with the element already.

It was better for him to comprehend light and darkness first, so the creation of their umbrella wouldn't later disrupt his efforts.

'Light, huh...'

He thought of Elena, of the mana she possessed.

His mind unconsciously delved into the world of his memories, and his All-Seeing Eyes activated to their fullest capacity.

Despite him viewing a moment from the past, he was still able to analyze Elena's mana as if she was standing right in front of him.

'Wow...'

Her path in Life Laws was extremely impressive, almost blindingly so, but she hadn't been slacking in her secondary element either.

'She focused on speed and attack power since she already has Life Laws to take care of support. This is good.'

It was better for him to comprehend strength-based powers as well, but he had no desire to copy his wife's path.

'Hmm...no, I shouldn't forget my purpose. I want to build these Laws to support my growth first and foremost. My goal should be a reflection of nature.'

Rather than a light that overpowered the darkness, he needed absolute harmony.

And that...

'That's way easier.'

Damien stopped thinking and got to work.

Light and Darkness, a very, very small piece of Yin and Yang that manifested in the universe to give it life. They could be considered subsidiary elements of those Higher Laws, as they were formed as a product of their influence.

When Light and Darkness came together, they created shadows.

That was the path Zara once attempted to walk.

Unfortunately, the Nox blood in her veins stopped her.

The Demonic Providence she possessed did not allow her to continue developing positively in the Light path, forcing her to enhance her darkness to its greatest limits.

She overcame its influence on her mind, but its influence on her body was nigh-absolute.

But Damien had seen it before.

She'd done it flawlessly, turning her original shadows into their base components to create spectacular displays of battle.

'Good. A basis.'

That was the end of the comprehensive segment of this current task.

There was no need to think anymore, because Damien knew exactly what to do.

He gathered his mana, using Zara and Elena as references while adding several thoughts of his own about balance and flow into its nature to morph it.

Magically, mysteriously, the mana changed, its original spherical form becoming shapeless as it was stretched about by his influence.

Time passed.

Only around 1 hour.

Did he need more time than that?

A murky grey energy sat in his hands.

When he opened his eyes, he pulled his hands apart, and with their motion, the grey separated into black and white.

Light and Darkness.

These two affinities could now be added to Damien's list.

#### Chapter 1166 Talent [4]

Once the first step was taken, every following step became easier until his journey was just a walk in the park.

Damien changed the way he viewed the elements.

Instead of considering them separately, he followed the galaxy analogy to give them position.

Light and Darkness created a container. They were the galaxy the rest could reside in.

Fire was the first to populate this newly created space. Since Damien already had it, he could use it as a perfect start.

Unfortunately, adding water now would ruin the balance rather than help it, so he had to wait before he could have another easy step.

Since he started with Fire, next was Earth.

Earth was a word with many meanings, and this element was the smallest of them.

It represented weight, strength, and fortitude, factors Damien had plenty of experience in.

He'd controlled gravity and weight before with Vectors, but he didn't make a connection with the Earth element at those times, so he couldn't quite use these experiences as a baseline.

Instead, the environment was his cue.

No Return Pass was a great place for this.

The ground was densely packed with rock that far exceeded the strength of regular earth. It couldn't be broken through normal means, and even Damien's greatest attacks could only cause crevices that would heal in a few hours at most.

The energy of Earth was extremely prevalent, and for Damien, whose perception was almost Divine, this was the greatest helper he could ask for.

Once he realized its presence there wasn't much to do.

It was as if the second he sensed it, the affinity already became his own.

Out of curiosity, he tried to move on to the next element, Wind, or Air, to see if it could be incorporated properly into the system.

Of the things he needed to comprehend, Wind was the one he was least familiar with.

Rose had a wind affinity, but she hardly ever used it. Unlike Elena, Rose's secondary affinity was useless when her first came into the equation.

Illusions could create wind more powerful than her affinity could, and she could manipulate them any way she wished to.

However, what Damien needed was just a start.

Once again, he made his way down memory lane.

All he did was look at her mana.

The All-Seeing Eyes didn't seem to have developed since Damien hardly used them anymore, but in reality, they'd been growing steadily.

The problem was that his enemies scaled much faster.

When he was put in front of the Rose who was still a 2nd class practitioner, everything was unveiled in full.

He could see the truths within the mana. Runes flowed into his head, translating into knowledge about Wind Laws he'd never encountered before.

This law, focused on speed, dexterity, and sharpness, was like a perfect balancer for the qualities of Earth.

Once he gained this information, it happened like magic.

Two new elements appeared in his repertoire, Earth and Wind as one.

There was nothing else to do.

Metal was easy to extrapolate from his knowledge of Earth and Fire. Wood was even simpler since he'd already mastered its greater form, and the rest was a matter of addition.

The hardest part was maintaining balance and making sure the elements never went out of order.

The rest was finished in a matter of hours, but it took half a day to achieve balance.

When all elements finally reached their proper positions...

Hong!

The whole system shined and an ancient bell struck. It was an event that would've been celebrated grandly by the universe if Damien wasn't in a place so isolated.

Yet, Damien didn't even realize how significant his achievement was.

Huu...

Damien let out a deep breath.

He was hardly conscious during this whole process.

His mind wandered somewhere else and his thoughts became vague. He intuitively moved from element to element and when he came back to reality, there was a fully formed system before him.

Haa...

Huu...

His breaths were loud.

All sound in the background drowned out.

And his mind was pulled into that system.

Every element became a planet of its own. He saw the shadows floating through space, separating into Light and Darkness before rejoining and drifting into the void.

Fire, Water, Earth, Wind, Metal, and Wood were the main planets in the system.

Lightning and Ice were more periphery like exoplanets, and faintly...

'It's vague, but there's more.'

He could expand this system.

There was more to be discovered.

The five elements weren't the only things in nature. Because of their influence, many other forces came into being.

At this moment, Damien realized that if he really wanted to, he could seize control over every single one of them.

However...

'I simply have no need to.'

There was now a new affinity in his status, simply titled [Elemental]. This was all the confirmation he needed.

'I'm finished.'

He had to bring the elements up to the comprehension he held for Spacetime and Samsara, but that was a timely process, not something he could do now.

He didn't have the ability to force comprehension yet.

But he could absolutely draw the energy from the surroundings into his body through Devour to exponentially speed up his training.



Damien stood up. He was already thinking about the next step.

But the universe wasn't willing to let him pass over his accomplishment.

Damien just did something hardly anyone in the entire history of the universe had ever been able to do.

In a single day.

If this didn't enhance his Legend, then what would?

Damien's rank naturally increased to the next level.

Because it wasn't just his Legend that was affected, but his Divinity!

Existence and Nonexistence were not universal forces. Therefore, of the things the universe could recognize, Damien had conquered all but the absolute highest level.

The Divinity he was supposed to be building as he made his way through the nine revolutions, even he didn't know the identity of it.

But the universe seemed to have an inkling.

Because it realized just how close he was now.

6th revolution.

Damien was officially a High Commander level expert.

He used 2 years to rush to the top of the universe's power levels.

By the time he left, wouldn't he be a monster?

'Well, that was the goal from the start.'

Damien shook his head and refocused on the environment around him.

The sensation of thousands of minds connected to his own enveloped him, and he regained sight of the battle situation.

'...these numbers are getting out of hand.'

It had only been a day since he stopped counting, but the number already increased by several hundred million.

'Where are they even getting all these goons?'

Damien really never questioned the number of Lesser Nox, attributing it to the Nox's great population, but it couldn't be so simple.

For them to send hundreds of millions or even billions of Lesser Nox to No Return Pass while still having the ability to force the universe's forces into a corner was genuinely insane.

'Another thing added to the list.'

It was getting long now.

He wasn't expecting a five-year sentence that pushed back the Abyss visit that would answer these questions, but now that it was here, he had to wait a few more years before answering them.

Until then...

Damien's eyes narrowed.

'...let's grind.'

Chapter 1167 In The Shadows [1]

The Nox used three separate strategies in the destruction of Sectors thus far.

The Elven Domain was destroyed through pure strength. Nothing was able to resist the technological warfare the Nox were able to utilize at the time, especially not the universe's weakest race, the Elves.

Eden was destroyed similarly, but the universe still had the chance to fight back. The strategy the enemy chose was all-out war. The Nox took a huge loss in their technology and lost the ability to deploy destroyer starships after this war, but they were still able to come out victorious.

Nevertheless, unlike elves, who had colonies in several places, the Plant Races were essentially wiped out from the universe, at least in their complete, organized form.

Finally, the Giant Domain was taken with a strategy that still couldn't be explained. The best explanation was that they "rewrote the programming" of those targeted World Cores so they would naturally destroy themselves.

Like the Elven Domain's fate, the Giant Domain was eradicated with no help from outsiders.

Only those Giants who stayed in Hephaestus with Heaven's Army or had similar situations survived.

Of the three, this was the greatest hit to Grand Heavens Boundary.

As Damien had mentioned several times, the Giants were the most secure race of them all.

There was no such thing as a traitorous giant. Whether it was due to the mistakes of their ancestors or their natural disposition for justice was unknown, but there wasn't a single member of their race that diverged from their instinct.

justice was unknown, but there wasn't a single member of their race that diverged from their instinct.

The loyalty of their race, combined with their ability to freely change size, made them perfect for countless operations that couldn't be entrusted to others.

Without them, the operations of Heaven's Army suffered quite a bit.

The enemy's new target was the Beast Domain.

Their assault had continued for half a year now, marking a year and three months since Damien's imprisonment.

This time's strategy once again changed.

Unpredictability seemed to be their priority.

Their attacks were sporadic, and their troops were hidden well in various places, not out in the open like they'd been thus far.

The pocket dimensions they created could hold an untold number of Nox Beings who were merely waiting for their turn to shine.

In addition to capacity, their stealth wasn't to be laughed at. They weren't impossible to find, but the difficulty was definitely there.

The Nox had an advantage in deployment time and the element of surprise despite being the offenders in someone else's territory.

The teams who once guarded Eien retreated into the universe long ago and formed a new frontline that allowed them to utilize the spatial anomaly outside a portion of the Beast Domain to their advantage, somewhat leveling the playing field.

This war was still fresh, as were the memories of the past three sectors that faced their tragic fates.

Those fighting for the Beast Domain did not take the enemy lightly.

They coordinated with Luxurion's backline division to keep the momentum stable and disallow the Nox from using the full potential of their advantage, and so far, things were going according to plan.

"We've discovered 16000 pocket dimensions thus far, but per your order, we have not made it known. Here is the information our scouts have been able to gather without revealing themselves."

A woman with sleek black hair and cold eyes handed a collection of jade slips to a stalwart old man, who nodded and dismissed her before turning his gaze towards them.

"16000, eh? I'm afraid we are far further behind than expected."

The man muttered to himself, but his words were answered regardless.

"What are you planning to do? At this point, the information needs to be reported. Otherwise, things will not end well."

The old man looked up, taking sight of the new woman who appeared in his quarters.

"You are?" He asked without answering.

"Is there a need to say?"

"You..."

The old man's eyes narrowed.

The woman was quite attractive, definitely at the top of the universe's beauty standard, but all of her charm was faded to him.

The color of her hair was the part that attracted his gaze.

This crimson red color, deep like blood, the eyes that matched and were filled with a hidden light of cruelty unobservable to the normal eye...

"A female Bloodlock? How rare."

"Hm?"

The woman's eyes glowed menacingly.

"Did you say something?"

"It is not an insult, merely an observation."

"One from a fool. Our family only cares for strength. This should be clear."

Yes, the Bloodlock Clan was a family that put strength above all else, but it was also a raging patriarchy.

Immortal Blood Asura created it in such a way where they were suppressed, even if they were direct descendants.

This lady's existence in front of him was already a miracle, since any woman who became this strong should've been long dead by now!

"Why is a Bloodlock visiting me now? What interest do you have in our affairs?" The old man asked, changing the subject.

"That's simple. This information, shouldn't it be given to a higher authority? Or are you hoarding it in hopes of monopolizing the glory?"

The old man frowned.

"Young lady, that is quite a tall accusation to be pulling from thin air."

"Ah?" The Bloodlock woman hummed with a strange smile.

"But is it really just air?"

She slammed her hand down on his desk, looking into his eyes with those glowing and terrifying pupils of hers.

"Personal benefits are reserved for the living. Take care to remember that."

"..."

The old man didn't dare to meet her gaze.

He didn't know what kind of power she was using, but anything a Bloodlock did was sure to be merciless.

If he met her gaze, he would undoubtedly die, regardless of his status.

"Take your time to think. I won't bother you until then."

The woman's gaze dulled and she stepped away, preparing to leave.

But the old man was faster.

"I must've been out of my mind. There is no authority more trustworthy than your Bloodlock Clan, so how about I give these reports directly to you?"

Tap!

The woman stopped in her tracks and turned around, smiling lightly.

She swept her hand through the air and summoned the jade slips on the man's desk into her grasp.

"Hmm, I like people who know their place."

Without another word, she took her leave.

The old man slumped into his chair, beads of sweat dripping down his forehead.

It was a short and mostly harmless interaction. The way she talked made it seem like she was concerned for the universe and acting on the side of righteousness.

Was it because she suspected someone was watching them?

That woman was too terrifying.

And whatever she was going to do now...



"Haa..."

It had nothing to do with him, but he was certain it would be a far worse outcome than if he continued to act selfishly as he did.

Several minutes passed in silence before the secretary from earlier came rushing through the door again.

"Sir, there's news!"

"What is it?" He said, standing up and addressing her urgency.

"There's..."

The secretary's body trembled strangely.

Why did she seem...

"There's a mountain of currency cards in the corridor outside! It amounts to at least several billion units!"

Ah.

It seemed his decision to fold wasn't just a one-time thing.

It seemed he'd picked a side.

It seemed incredibly suspicious, but if benefits came as easy as this...

...wasn't it okay?

## Chapter 1168 In The Shadows [2]

A woman stood aboard a covert starship racing through the starry sky, a communication talisman in her hand.

"It's done. With the Radiant Moon Guildmaster's reports, we've gathered almost all present data on Nox pocket dimensions in the Beast Domain."

Her red hair swayed lightly with her movements as she spoke, indifference in her eyes.

"How should we proceed?"

"An envoy will see you soon. Pass the information to him. Further orders will be provided at a later date."

"Are you pretending to be a robot for a reason? Don't tell me I'm getting cut off already."

"..."

"There is nothing like that. Please maintain professionalism over comms."

"Ha, professionalism, you say? What a joke."

"If you are finished reporting, I will be disconnecting."

"Tch."

The woman clicked her tongue as the talisman's light died down.

Her gaze traveled to the jade slips organized neatly on a table nearby.

The total number was 62, and together, they held information on the location of what was potentially billions of Nox.

Where this information was going to go?

'Nowhere.'

Why would it go where it needed to?

It was no longer a secret in the Bloodlock Clan which side they stood on. Those who opposed were killed quietly, and those who did not were forced under Mana Oath to make sure word never got out.

Such a process was bound to have holes, but when Immortal Blood Asura personally supervised it, no such thing could sprout.

This woman, who was in charge of gathering the information, was called Elyssa Bloodlock.

As for her position...?

'Dammit.'

She sneered to herself, gripping the arms of her chair powerfully enough to turn any normal material to dust.

What else could her position be?

She was just a tool.

Since she was sent to do this work directly, wasn't she the scapegoat they'd prepared in case they were discovered?

It wasn't an uncommon thing. Her mother died in a similar situation, as did the stepmother her father married afterward.

The women of the Bloodlock Clan, as the Radiant Moon Guildmaster said, were suppressed beyond belief.

On one hand, it was extremely impractical to deny them the right to strength when they could benefit the clan as long as they were able, but on the other hand, when the clan itself had other uses for its women, battle power tended to become irrelevant.

As a woman, one could follow one of three paths in the Bloodlock Clan.

Either they could find a clan member to marry and keep their lives stable for as long as said clan member was useful, become breeding tools used solely to produce more quantity for the clan to use as they pleased, or, as it was in most cases, they would become cauldrons.

Elyssa was the last.

The reason she was granted strength was so she could eventually give that strength to someone else.

Just like the others, she'd be brutally assaulted and then thrown away as a corpse with her Legend consumed by someone from the main lineage.

This was the fate she wasn't supposed to know, yet knew from the very beginning.

However, there was no escaping from Immortal Blood Asura.

Those who tried became...examples. The type that made sure none would ever dare follow them in their mutiny.

'How suffocating.' Elyssa thought, frowning unpleasantly.

She was too old to get enraged at it, but that didn't mean she was resigned to it either.

'Just a bit more...'

Her gaze went out the starship window.

In the distance, deeply hidden in the twinkling blackness of the starry sky, was a place she had yet to visit.

One of the only camps in the Beast Domain that was guaranteed to resist her coercion.

'Hmm...'

She felt a new presence enter the ship.

'They came faster than I thought.'

She turned her gaze away from that place and picked up the case of jade slips.

'I guess I need to make myself useful again. Let's not return to the clan quite yet.'

With that, she went out to meet the envoy.

Today was just like any other day.

A constant battle for survival.

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In a distant corner of the Sector, Tian Yang's eyes suddenly went up, his vision piercing through the atmosphere.

'Hmm, someone was watching?'

He felt a gaze, but it disappeared before he could trace it.

'I wonder who it could be.'

Tian Yang was also stationed in the Beast Domain, along with most of the Human Domain's forces.

Tang Lingzi, Drunken Old Immortal, Shanguan Yu, Bai Xieren, and a multitude of other familiar experts made up this camp.

Of them all, this could be considered the one most influenced by Damien.

They'd been tasked not with finding Nox pocket dimensions, but with raiding them.

It was evidently a move from somewhere above to suppress those close to Damien, but they really underestimated who they were dealing with.

Under Tian Yang's guidance and with the aid of several Supremes from across the Human Domain and others they'd made connections with over time, this camp managed to destroy tens of pocket dimensions with more efficiency than anyone else.

None of them felt aggravated because of their positions.

Because those people at the top made the stupidest possible decision with this placement!

In the first place, Tian Yang was a rare Demigod who'd built a Divinity on Space Laws.

Pocket dimensions? He could find them far easier than anyone else!

They weren't being suppressed at all. Rather, the "autonomy" that was supposed to cause their downfall actually helped them perform to their best.

"Brother Tian? Something wrong?"

A voice came from the side, bringing Tian Yang's focus back to reality.

"Haha, nothing much. I sensed a gaze, but it has already disappeared."

"Hmm, this cannot be overlooked in the current climate. We will need to increase the number of patrol squads in the starry sky."

"Mm, I agree. Nevertheless, why have you come this time? I assume it's not just to have drinks with an old friend."

"Hahaha, can it not be? So many years have passed that you've become an old man before I ever realized."

"Are you not the same? Brother, your sight is a little narrow."

"Never. You still dare underestimate me?"

"You still dare to brag? I heard my disciple saved your ass when you met. Aren't you ashamed?"

"Tch. It is only your luck to have a disciple like him."

Tian Yang grinned proudly.

"Of course it is."

His brows raised as he suddenly remembered something.

"Ah, do you not have a genius of your own now?"

The man sitting across from him smiled wryly.

It was completely different from his usually imposing demeanor.

"You...do you have to brag so much?"

"Hahaha! You were the one who decided to compete! Do not worry. I will not discriminate against my grand disciple because she is your daughter. In fact, doesn't this make the generations fit more accurately?"

"Tch, you expect me to call you father? Win a single drinking contest with me and I'll consider it!"

"Haha, you're on!"

Compared to other places, the atmosphere between these two brothers was like a light spring breeze.

But under their jovial facades were hardened experts well aware of the greater situation of the world without needing to be informed.



Tian Yang, whose power matched the top experts of the universe despite his origins from the Human Domain.

And the Golden Dragon Emperor, whose home was now being destroyed.

Their conversation was light.

But the purpose of their meeting was not this.

Countermeasures needed to be formed.

And other than those in this camp...

...not a single soul could be trusted.

Chapter 1169 In The Shadows [3]

"What are your thoughts on the situation?"

After a long while of idle conversation, Tian Yang finally brought up the most important question.

"Realistically?" The Golden Dragon Emperor responded.

"Mm. We don't have room for ideals anymore."

"Hmm..."

The emperor furrowed his brows in thought for a moment.

Speaking in ideals, in false bravado, was incredibly easy. He could say so many confident words about their fates in a single breath that all of them lost meaning.

But if he had to think from the perspective of reality, based on the current situation and accounting for unknown variables that were guaranteed to pop up with an enemy like the Nox...

"It is not appealing."

This was also easy to say. Everyone could say this much.

"Luciel has been unable to control the internal situation. More and more loyal soldiers are turning their backs under the false assumption that they can save themselves. The Nox themselves continue to alter their strategies to remain unpredictable, and their cohesiveness is unmatched by beings like us."

Luciel and Tian Yang became acquainted around the time of the Grand Assembly and had been working closely together since then.

It was a network that also included those like Errysea and Director Alucard, those who were absolutely trustworthy.

This relatively small camp in the Beast Domain didn't enter many people's sights, but it actually held greater significance than any of them could imagine.

Luciel was well aware of the internal situation's deterioration. He was the one working hardest to calm it and bring order into operations.

However, his influence was waning.

His tactics and strategies were great, and his ability to command couldn't be questioned either. In all regards, there was no logical reason to phase him out of the ruling position, but it was still happening.

Was it because he was too righteous? Did his movements interfere with the interests of others?

But with the Heavenly Clan supporting him and his goal being the salvation of their universe, just whose interest could be touched.

"Their existence is no longer a rumor, eh? The highest level has been corrupted beyond saving."

Tian Yang sighed wryly.

Too much damage had already been done.

"I will communicate with Luciel later. Instead of trying to order something already corrupted by chaos, it is better to eliminate the roots and prevent the spread. We must begin a search for traitors."

"Such is always the case. How many times have we assumed we had taken care of all traitors and secured ourselves? Unfortunately, there must be enough in hiding protected by those at the top. Now that the situation is spiraling out of control, they are taking the opportunity to show their fangs."

Tian Yang nodded heavily.

There weren't many clues at the moment since Heaven's Army was breaking down on several fronts at once, but information was something to be collected over time.

"The only question is whether or not we can buy enough time to solve this without too many losses. Despite the negatives, I still believe we can save this place with enough effort. We've done it before, haven't we? Perhaps not on this scale, but the world being against us has never held us back before."

They were idealistic words, the type they promised not to speak, but Tian Yang couldn't help himself.

He truly believed it.

The universe was filled with rotten trees that bred an unending stream of rotten apples, but he believed in the premier seedlings that were growing under the protection of those who remained just.

"Time" was still the greatest issue, but from the Prismatic Sun Holy Master's reports, those geniuses who'd been taken for training were progressing steadily and would be ready to join the frontlines in another three years at most.

Other than them, there was also the recently rising Judgement Order.

That wasn't an organization that could function with the younger generation alone. Many experts backed them from the shadows, including Tian Yang and the rest who had a deep personal connection with the group.

More than miscellaneous geniuses, he believed in them more.

Funnily enough, this belief came from their relationships with his disciple.

'With the way things are going, he will undoubtedly surpass me within a few years.'

That child was special, but as he continued to grow, it became clear to Tian Yang just how special he was.

He wasn't someone meant to mingle with people like them who had limited talent.

He was someone who should've been born on a better playing field.

But, his existence in the universe was more than just a blessing.

Tian Yang knew very clearly why the Human Domain was still safe. The beautiful array of spatial traps he'd set was so complex that someone like Tian Yang could learn many truths from them.

Even disregarding that, wasn't there still no news from No Return Pass?

Damien didn't contact them, but the Nox hadn't made any moves either. With their nature, they would've been ecstatically boasting if they managed to kill the universe's greatest genius.

Wasn't it funny?

A single man was out there slaughtering more enemies than the strongest of Supremes active on the frontlines.

His existence, their existence, and the existence of those who supported and sponsored their growth, that was the origin of Tian Yang's faith.

As for the older generation...

"It doesn't matter. For old bones like us, isn't one last stint on the battlefield our ultimate wish? We just need to stay alive long enough for them to mature, then we can start running wild until the reins can be passed over proudly."

The Golden Dragon Emperor hummed in agreement, but his expression did not lighten.

Tian Yang shook his head and patted his shoulder.

"Come, we have work to do. Regardless of reality, we must not lose hope in creating the fantastical future we dream of. Otherwise, we truly succumb to impossibility."

The Golden Dragon Emperor sighed.

"Haa, I understand this much. I naturally will not falter before this level of pressure, however..."

He looked up at his old friend before lifting his gaze into the sky, where the Fate Star shone ever so brightly.

It was alone in the starry sky. The twinkling lights nearby were far enough to form a massive void in the blackness of the night on this distant planet

That blackness used to be empty.

Now, it was filled up with too many hidden enemies to count.

"If..."

He looked back into Tian Yang's eyes with absolute clarity.

"If worst comes to worst, please take care of Astoria."

Yang grinned.

"I'm afraid you will have to look for someone more trustworthy."

He stood up and gazed at the same star his friend watched with such a forlorn expression, his eyes bright with fire.

"10,000 years ago, on that very star, we made a bet."

The Golden Dragon Emperor raised his brow, his eyes widening slightly when the memory returned to him.

Tian Yang smiled as he saw the man's expression change and continued.

"Xingtian might not be with us anymore, but I refuse to lose."

"You're a crazy bastard."

"I earned an entire title due to that fact. It still has not left my status."

"Hm. I am thoroughly convinced. A crash bastard will always remain a crazy bastard."

The Golden Dragon Emperor stood up as well.

"You want to win that bad?"

Tian Yang shrugged.

"You can judge that yourself. Then, have you decided to continue moping here, or are you coming with me?"

"Neither. I'm going back to Beast Emperor Star. There is much to be done."

"Haha, bastard. Get out from behind that desk and join us on the battlefield."

"Maybe next time. This one...well, is there any need for me to come?"

The two men smiled.

"Not in the slightest," Tian Yang replied with supreme confidence.

As if he decided to break the atmosphere in a single move, Tian "It's just a few tens of millions Nox, right? My juniors can finish them off with a pinky."

They'd spoken for almost three hours now. Everything that needed to be said, and everything unsaid was understood.

Their conversation was more for them to bring peace to their minds than anything else. Even people at their level could experience mental fatigue from time to time.

Fatigue could be cleared away with good friends and spirit liquor.

But the grass was still uncut.

Before they could pull out the roots and rid themselves of this fatigue forever, they had to finish mowing the grass that dared pollute their lawn.

Chapter 1170 In The Shadows [4]

Tian Yang and the Golden Dragon Emperor discussed much more than they let on, but they simply weren't able to speak as openly as they needed to.

The universe had too many dark forces moving around. It was too late for those forces to silence those who understood their existence, but if any clue to their identities was revealed, such niceties would be forgotten.

The main concern for this war and many of those in the past never changed.

It was always those inside that ruined things for everyone, not the enemy themselves.

For a race that was defined by their straightforward belligerence, the Nox were surprisingly good at convincing those opposing them to switch sides.

Whether it was out of fear or something more positive, many chose to believe in those who could show the kind of power the Nox could.

But it was all a facade.

The Nox were not united, nor were they a race with much prospect in the long term.



Their only goal was to destroy. They'd been destroying and destroying for millions of years and had yet to be satiated.

Grand Heavens Boundary was only their current target. If it ceased to exist, who could say they'd become docile?

The Nox didn't grow through building their society. They didn't have the usual civilization structure people were used to, and judging them by such standards was a fruitless task.

In essence, the only way for the Nox to develop was through constant destruction, and their developments only increased their destruction capability. Those factors like quality of living were meaningless to them.

So what kind of foolishness was it to follow them?

How could anyone think they could offer something better?

How could anyone believe they'd actually survive and be granted what they were promised by those they submitted themselves to?

It was mind-boggling, but in situations where people formed relationships with the Nox, they didn't tend to have the time or peace of mind to consider the facts.

What they saw was one simple picture.

These creatures were destroying the universe with frightening efficiency.

Submitting oneself to them meant joining the winning side.

When the other option was death, was there anything left to say?

Nonetheless, it could be inferred that most of those influenced by their words were those without much to fight for.

Nobody wanted to die, but people were more than willing to die for those things they cared for more than anything else.

"Hmph."

Immortal Blood Asura sneered to himself.

In his mind, they were the foolish ones.

Permanence was not a real concept. Nothing could last forever.

Those who submitted were weak. They were rabble who held no more meaning than the citizens he was mutating into artificial Nox to this very day.

In the end, regardless of their position, they were meant to be cannon fodder.

But cannon fodder that accepted its place was better than the little ants that still tried to kill the elephant even after it crushed their hive in a single step.

He disdained them.

He was different.

He had power, power he gained for himself, and power that would only be used for himself.

Whether the Nox won or the universe won, his survival was guaranteed.

His enemies never survived encounters with him. The situation was definitely restraining him, but those he wished to deal with could never escape his grasp.

"The Great Angel's influence in Luxurion is decreasing. Within two years, he will hold no power in Heaven's Army."

"Elyssa Bloodlock has finished her duty. The information is available for viewing at any time. In addition, the Void Old Immortal and Golden Dragon Emperor met. They discussed regular planning and alluded to the existence of traitors, however, it is unclear how much they know."

Immortal Blood Asura hummed, acknowledging the two people who gave him their individual reports.

"Other news?"

"Yes, Sir. The Artificial Soldier Project is progressing steadily. The army will be available to deploy in 4 years at the latest."

"4 years?"

Immortal Blood Asura frowned. That was not nearly fast enough.

"Tell them to accelerate the process by any means. A defective product is acceptable, however, it must function for a duration."

"Yes, Sir."

The reports continued, listing the situation in Eien as well as the Nox's progress into the Beast Domain.

As they continued, the type of information these two provided became more and more frightening.

"Heaven's Army's current deployment plans are..."

"Those in executive positions that can be pulled over are..."

"These are targets for elimination. Their removal will..."

"There is activity on Death Emperor Star. Hidden Death Valley has begun..."

"We have received news from the Abyss..."

Information nobody should know was presented like candy. Immortal Blood Asura listened with an uninterested impression until the very end.

"No Return Pass has not been breached."

His brown twitched slightly, imperceptibly.

"That is enough. Return to your duties, and do not raise suspicions."

"We comply, Lord."

The two, one man and one woman, turned to exit the room.

"Pathetic."

Of those in the universe, perhaps they were the most pathetic.

From their positions high in their ivory towers to mere secretaries reporting to him. To think people like them could be conquered with worms no bigger than a fingernail.

Gerard Wright and Anastasia Night.

These two respected and dignified Heaven's Army Great Commanders were nothing more than puppets now.

If not for them, how could his plans progress so smoothly?

It was truly laughable for people like the Golden Dragon Emperor and that old pretender from the Human Domain to think they could understand the situation.

There was only one thing Immortal Blood Asura could never gain control over.

'That pest...'

He never thought a grudge he dismissed when his grandson died and picked up half-heartedly to save face after his son's death would grow to this point.

He never thought a measly junior could cause him more annoyance than the enemies he viewed as his equals.

Frankly, that young man should not have been alive.

He only stood there in No Return Pass, surviving through some unknown means, because he was lucky.

If there weren't so many eyes...

If there was even a single lull in that surveillance...

'Hmph.'

He still didn't need to get caught up on that junior.

He had no assistance in any way, and perhaps he'd been able to use tricks to survive for this long, but tricks were also temporary. He would die soon enough.

Plus, it simply didn't matter.

He was in No Return Pass right now. Accessing that place was not simple and couldn't be done covertly, so Immortal Blood Asura couldn't touch him either way.

If he somehow managed to miraculously survive through those five years, then his death would occur in the sixth.

Immortal Blood Asura's focus needed to be elsewhere.

"You arrived early."

"We did not set a time. I came when it was convenient."

"No matter. Let us depart."

"Hmm."

A man appeared in the corner of the room without a trace, and together with Immortal Blood Asura, he flashed away from Blood Asura Holy Land entirely.

He was naturally the Karmic Emperor.

And the purpose of this visit...

...was to discuss the beginning of the second phase of their grand plan.