

Void 1191

Chapter 1191 Soul World [2]

As mentioned before, Divine Soul Holy Land abandoned their people when the war reached Soul World.

At the start, they locked their doors and boarded up their windows. None of their disciples left the sect, and no news from them spread anywhere.

At this point, it was only assumed that they were cowards.

They lost their status almost instantly, but that was the end of it.

For the most part, everyone was too preoccupied to condemn them directly, only sully their reputation with time.

However, the progression of war led to the release of more information, through which people learned the truth.

Not only was Divine Soul Holy Land refusing to aid their people, they'd completely turned their backs on them.

Perhaps they were choosing a stance of neutrality and disassociation outwardly, but their people were actively working against their fellows.

It was mostly in the vein of information. As the rulers of this Sector, they had a greatly detailed record of every force present within it and their layouts.

On top of that, they hoarded the domain's resources for so many years, only to openly offer their coffers to the enemy when they appeared.

It was as if this moment had been planned for years.

"Father, why?!"

A voice boomed through the throne room of Divine Soul Holy Land's main building.

"You are smarter than this. The father I know would have never made such a decision. Do you think this is a means for survival? You are only leading our people to death!"

The one speaking was a man who looked roughly 25. His body was semi-transparent, but his form had a physical presence that only powerful Spirits possessed.

He was Pontius Alhara, the Young Master of Divine Soul Holy Land, and unlike the majority of its members, he only became aware of their actions when the rest of the universe did.

He had been hiding his thoughts for so long, trying to rationalize the choices of his seniors, but he just couldn't do it.

So today, he had to confront his father.

That man, Selicus Alhara, was a cold leader. He rarely ever showed expression, but the version of him Pontius knew had always been the kind father who was more intelligent than anyone else.

However, that demeanor no longer existed.

"Why, you ask?" He responded, gazing down at his son from his throne.

"For survival. There is no other reason."

"Survival?!"

Pontius practically roared at the outrageous words.

"What survival is there?! After this war when we lose value, those beasts will immediately eliminate us! They do not care for us, only for destruction!"

"That is where you are wrong," Selicus said, shaking his head.

"They are a distasteful race, but to say they only live for destruction is a lie. Yes, perhaps if we truly subordinate ourselves to them, the only end we will face is death. However, have we done so? We may be accessories to this sin, but we are not contributors."

Pontius couldn't even respond.

What was he supposed to say to such stupid reasoning?!

Where was the father he respected?!

"Haa..."

Selicus sighed seeing his son's expression.

"The universe is doomed. This is the prediction your ancestors made long before you were born. If the universe has no chance of survival, our Divine Soul Holy Land can only make plans for the future."

"For now, it may look like we are following the Nox, but that is not the truth."

"Instead, we are creating a place for ourselves in the Abyss."

Selicus' eyes flashed with blackness.

He wouldn't say he wasn't a traitor to his homeland, but he was not a dog for those scum.

He was just using them for his own purposes.

"We have incorporated their bloodline, but we have not become monsters like the rest. This is only because our Spirit Race possesses special bodies that are only partially involved in the physical plane. It is impossible for them to control us."

"However, with their bloodline, we will be granted a lifeline in the Abyss. Its deathly currents will not consume us, but instead will become food for our growth."

He stood up, his full gait exerting pressure on his only child.

"Tell me, Pontius, is my decision wrong?"

Pontius gritted his teeth.

Logically speaking, his judgement was far less flawed than the rest of those who betrayed the universe, but he still couldn't accept it.

To build a force in the Abyss? Instead of fighting for their home, he wanted to abandon it for a new one?

Did he think of the consequences?

No, even disregarding that, what made him so confident the Abyss would accept them?!

'We know nothing of that place. Even if we survive, wouldn't our lives be hell?'

Pontius glared at his father, but refused to answer the question.

Yet, his disdain was evident in his expression.

He turned around and stormed out of the throne room, unable to entertain this conversation any longer.

'Father might not realize it, but he is already corrupted by their idiocy. I cannot allow the legacy of Divine Soul Holy Land to be tarnished by his incompetence.'

Even though he said it, he didn't believe it could be accomplished.

There were too many traitors. The entire older generation already followed his father without hesitation, and the younger generation and regular disciples were slowly being brainwashed with every passing day.

"I cannot do this on my own."

His position as Young Master would amount to nothing if he didn't adhere to their beliefs.

So his only option was to seek outside help.

'But...where?'

Where would he find someone willing to help him, to trust him despite his identity?

'I heard there is a new force...the Judgement Order, was it?'

His eyes narrowed as he reached his quarters and collapsed onto his bed.

'Do I have to abandon them...?'

Regardless of the high position his father held in his heart, Pontius didn't ignore Selicus' flaws.

'Father is too stubborn. Since he believes he is absolutely correct, and the ancestors seemed to hold the same thought, he will move without hesitation and his ears will not accept criticism.'

Perhaps he saw betrayal as a necessary evil for survival.

'But...I am alive.'

Despite rejecting the Nox lineage his father offered him and constantly voicing his opposition to their current direction, he was alive.

'Either father still cares for me, or...'

...he still had plans to use him.

'I have to find out what it is.'

If it was the former, he could still try to save their sect.

And if it was the latter...

'...I will bring this rotten place down with my own hands and rebuild it.'

To bring back the Divine Soul Holy Land he knew and loved, he was willing to risk everything.

'I should find a way to contact them.'

If those people on the outside could provide him backing...

He frowned as he snapped out of his thoughts.

'information comes first. Even if they are trustworthy, I cannot assume they will entertain my hopes.'

For his own sake, for the universe's sake, and for the sake of his father, who was blinded and misguided, he needed to find out the truth and fight.

Pontius was only one man in an influence of hundreds of thousands, but he was a seed of light in the darkness.

Not everyone was inherently bad.

For the most part, those who followed Selicus' treacherous path were just confused. Like the rest of the common traitors, they were crushed by circumstance and unable to properly understand their choices.

But if there was a light to guide them out of the darkness in their minds, there was still hope.

At least, that's what Pontius told himself.

Because without that hope, he would be crushed as well.

Chapter 1192 Soul World [3]

Within the grand tapestry of the cosmos, as worlds were born and died in the cosmic blink, weeks and months passed unnoticed, like fleeting moments in the life of the universe.

Pontius continued to move secretly within Divine Soul Holy Land to gather information and people, and over time, he reached the conclusion he desired.

'It's already too late.'

His father and the elders spoke as if they planned to cut ties with the Nox once they fled to the Abyss, but he could see the corruption in their eyes.

The more time passed, the less they acted like their original selves.

It was right to say they'd been controlled long ago, and were slowly corroded until they couldn't even understand the change in their thoughts.

He could no longer hold off.

He established communications with the Judgement Order one month back, and he'd been in semi-frequent contact with them ever since.

Their ways were...incomprehensible to say the least.

Pontius couldn't understand how geniuses younger than himself could hold such confidence and determination, but their flames burned into him as well and gave him the drive he was lacking before.

A plan to take down Divine Soul Holy Land from the inside started to form, and it would be carried out as soon as possible, but while they plotted for such an event...

The Soul World was slowly dying.

The frontlines of Eien crumbled first.

Commander Huo was an amazing leader. To hold this line for years on end without faltering was a miracle in itself, but he alone was not enough to do so.

The passing of time led to the eradication of more and more of his troops until finally, there weren't nearly enough of them to hold their defenses.

When that moment came, he made a decision that would haunt him for the rest of his life, but was best for everyone.

He took those willing to follow him and retreated to the Divine Realm.

Naturally, the Ancient God Clan's job became impossible due to his absence.

Instead of holding the entire border of Soul World, they were forced to concentrate their forces on the boundary, which left Calypto open.

The Nox took that opportunity to strike with a full-force blow that stunned the universe.

They took a thousand worlds down in a single day, and as if that wasn't enough, they started directly targeting the Ancient God Clan.

What could they do?

How could they respond?

They simply couldn't.

The Ancient God Clan was growing steadily, but they had not reached their peak yet. As a single influence, how much could they actually do to affect the bigger picture when they were being struck with such ferocity in numbers that they could hardly maintain themselves?

The Ancient God Clan was luckier than most.

They were specifically created by a member of Void Palace to become Damien's subordinates in the future, so the world that doubled as their prison had sufficient functionality to help them survive.

This functionality mainly meant they would retreat deep into the folds of space, or even move their world to an entirely different domain.

Regardless of the path they chose, it remained true that they could no longer give their everything to support Soul World as they'd been doing.

Two of the Sector's greatest pillars fell one after another in a matter of months.

Things could only deteriorate from there.

And so, as the fifth year dawned and flowed, the domain was picked apart by those enemies who prayed for its fall.

Heaven's Army never once showed its face.

Those soldiers who started doubting their superiors still had no choice but to obey their orders lest they be killed for nothing, and nothing needed to be said about the older generation.

Nirvana Soul Holy Land did its absolute best.

In the meantime, Pontius' plans unraveled in the darkness and affected the foundation of Divine Soul Holy Land step by step.

He was able to bring a majority of the common disciples to his side, and after receiving support from the Judgement Order, he gained access to a force of Demigod backers who could stand against the sect elders, which allowed him to act without worry.

While he wasn't able to tear it down anywhere near completely, he was able to cut contact between them and the Nox, which, by intention, cut the Nox's ability to use Soul World's ambient advantages.

The domain that was projected to fall easily was able to put up a far greater resistance than anyone else thus far, but that was it.

The situation had its ups and downs. There were times when the Spirit armies believed in their chances of success.

But they were fated to fail.

Whether it be the forces of good or evil, for better or for worse, all had decided to abandon Soul World.

And standing alone against the full force of the Nox was impossible from the beginning.

When 6 months passed in the 5th year, a grand migration embarked.

Those who could recognize the flow of events gradually retreated to the Divine Realm after giving up hope for their home Sector, and once they moved, those who saw them did the same.

Nearly half of the remaining Spirits left Soul World. They used teleportation arrays, artifacts, and even their own two legs to get as far away as possible.

Though Luciel had the means to stop them in his hands, he didn't do so.

After all, these people weren't fleeing from war, but from death. As long as they could become useful when his plans came to fruition, he didn't mind their presence.

There was no need to go into details about what took place from then on.

The Soul World crumbled.

World after world was destroyed and World Cores were stolen with none the wiser. Populations were massacred, entire races faced genocide, and calamity consumed the world.

By the time it was all over, Pontius successfully took down Divine Soul Holy Land, but his father and the elders were still alive, as they'd escaped to who knows where when the Nox showed the true colors they never hid and attacked the sect.

Pontius and a portion of his people were saved by the Judgement Order and their supporters, but that was it.

It was a pyrrhic victory at best.

And at the end of the day, Soul World still fell.

Nirvana Soul Palace was conquered. Its leaders were publicly executed, and those who still followed them to that day fled instead of risking their lives further.

The support pillars they'd been relying on were gone.

They already saw what would happen if they stayed unorganized and separated at the start of the invasion. Now that the situation repeated itself, they weren't willing to die meaninglessly.

So, Soul World fell.

But it wasn't all bad.

These people didn't lose their fighting spirit, they just lost their chance.

When they retreated to the Divine Realm, Luciel and the forces of justice received an unexpected boon.

That is, these masterless soldiers joined their faction and expanded the avenues they could take for the future.

Grand Heavens Boundary, a once mighty universe with 9 great Sectors filled with powerful experts, was cut down to over half its original size.

All that remained were the Divine Realm, Infernal Realm, Human Domain, and Hephaestus.

In Luxurion...

Shiiiiing!

A bloody scene presented itself.

Those people who called themselves "The Council," the ones who pushed Luciel out of power and sidelined him to ruin the universe for their own gain, the group of fake scholars and cowards led by David Joyce...

...were now just corpses on the cold marble floors of the Sky Castle.

Luciel stood over them with sword in hand. The blood dripping from its blade was unreasonably loud as he glanced over the scene of cruelty he'd just created.

"It's finally time..."

His eyes hardened. A blue spirit without constant form appeared at his side.

"Let us begin."

Chapter 1193 Truth [1]

"Huu..."

A breath swept through the air.

WHOOOOOOSH!

Its force spread disaster upon the land.

The winds that whipped through the air were enough to slaughter armies and destroy continents, but they originated from but a single breath.

"I'm finally here..."

Damien opened his eyes.

The mana in his body was stable like a calm ocean, with gait far surpassing such a water body.

"The 9th revolution..."

He clenched his fist.

"...I'm finally a Supreme."

He stopped counting time a while ago. Such thoughts only inhibited his practice.

However, it should've been several months into the 5th year by now.

"It's almost over, huh..."

His long imprisonment had developed into the only thing he knew in a short period. It was hard for him to imagine life returning to normalcy, but that time wasn't far away.

'Putting that aside, even after reaching this level, it doesn't feel like much has changed.'

Damien just became a Supreme, but he had fighting power on par with them ever since he became a High Commander.

Even he didn't know his current level, but he was certain nobody in the universe was his opponent.

"...except for those guys, of course."

He was confident in himself, but he was very clear of the difference between a lower existence and a Divinity. It was impossible for him to touch them until he reached their league.

'Plus...'

He clenched his fist with a frown.

'How long is it going to take?'

Despite being absorbed in the task for several years at this point, he still hadn't found a way to fuse his Laws.

It was just too incomprehensible.

He knew the end goal he was trying to reach, but this wasn't a process where that was enough.

After all, just what would the fusion between Elemental Law and Samsara create?

He couldn't rationalize that force.

No, that force wasn't something to be rationalized.

The fundamental laws of the universe were known as such because they were complete in their individual forms and enhanced in conjunction.

They were separately created through a series of events that followed the presence of their superiors, however, they all stemmed from their origin concept individually.

'This is the problem with doing things that have never been done before. Even when I was doing the "impossible" previously, it was still within the realm of possibility.'

In simple terms, regardless of how much he broke the law, he still did so within the appropriate margins.

Right now, he was trying to completely escape the bounds of the universe with his own power.

'It's a sense of perspective I didn't have before. The Void is able to accomplish things like this so effortlessly that I forgot how insane my actions actually are.'

It wasn't like he gave up in the face of inevitability, but feeling it was another thing entirely.

'Since this path was set out for me, there has to be a solution. I need to escape the bounds of my own perception before I can even think about challenging reality itself.'

The concept didn't exist, so he had to create it. In essence, it was simple.

He just couldn't imagine it.

Reality was called as such for a reason. Everything that existed, everything that was real, was reality.

Whether it be truth or deceit, it was a concept that could be traced back to something real. Even the concept of nothingness itself was a reflection of reality as it was understood, so to an extent, it could be perceived.

'It would be so much easier if I could just comprehend Creation.'

The last of the existent forces he needed to learn, Creation and Destruction, were unavailable to lower existences.

Unless one was born with a natural affinity to the major concepts, it was impossible to perceive them.

The reason was simple.

Creation and Destruction in their fundamental forms were already Divine. They were acts of miracle that only Divinities had the qualifications to understand.

There were occasions in the long rivers of history where people were born with affinities towards them, but they could be counted on one hand.

"Haa..."

Damien sighed to himself.

"For now, it's better to stop pursuing this. I know where I need to go, but until I have a way to get there, I'm just banging my head against a wall."

It was a bit late to make this conclusion, but what could he do? He was too headstrong to give up easily, even if it was only a temporary retreat.

'Hmm...'

He sent his senses into his body.

'I only have half a year left here. I wonder how I should spend it?'

He could easily focus on forging or spirit liquor, but he wasn't in the mood to waste time right now.

'Fighting has become boring too.'

This state, where he was more powerful than his peers but not powerful enough to face his seniors, was something he was very familiar with.

Nowadays, seeing a Supreme come to challenge him wasn't as rare as it used to be, but his clones could take care of them without a problem.

As long as a few of them worked together, there wasn't a single Nox who could challenge him.

His current kill count was close to exceeding a trillion.

There was no way he wouldn't be bored of it by now.

However, this time, an absolute wall separated him from the ones he actually wanted to fight.

As he pondered on it, thinking of various ways to make proper use of his remaining time in isolation, he came to a blank.

'There's really nothing for me to do.'

The only step he could take was one he couldn't take.

He finally faced the impossibility that plagued all other practitioners.

"Haa..."

He sighed again.

He was starting to feel desolate.

Even though the Mind Prison shielded his ego, he could feel the effects of hopelessness creeping into his mind.

'This is a trial I have to overcome.'

He knew this, but he hated it.

He hated this feeling more than anything else.

As if he couldn't do anything. As if he was useless.

It was easy to use the Void.

He could default to it again and use it as a crutch to get himself out of this situation, but where would that take him?

'My goal is to become the master of the Void, not its slave.'

He had to do it alone.

He had to.

So...

"Fuck it."

Someone once said rest was just as important to a practitioner as training. Without a rested mind and body, the chances of failure became much higher, and failure at the critical moment could lead to a fatal incident.

6 months.

For Damien who moved relentlessly to learn and improve even when he was "resting," taking true rest for this long felt like a pipe dream.

But perhaps even that was training.

Training to build the patience to chase this impossible path, patience that would allow him to sit in meditation for thousands of years if he really desired it.

If he viewed it like that, his spirit flared.

He always welcomed a challenge, regardless of whether or not its form was strange.

'I wonder how they're doing on the other side...'

His desire to visit the Sanctuary was greater than ever.

'But I'll hold off for now. If I rush these things, what's the point of talking about patience?'

He was in a position where knowing about the situation wouldn't do him any good. He couldn't even affect it.

'Since Elvira is leading them, I can be confident they're moving smarter than they ever would if I took that position.'

He laid down on the cold ground of No Return Pass.

Alone and desolate.

That's how he'd spend the next few months.

Chapter 1194 Truth [2]

It was hard to imagine Damien Void relaxing.

When was the last time he did it properly?

He didn't really remember.

Whenever he visited the Sanctuary for "relaxation" or to spend time with Xue'er, he took a few days to go over management matters with Elvira and the other Emperors as well, so he wasn't really taking undivided rest days.

If he had to think of a time when he rested with nothing else in mind...

'...maybe back when I first took Rose to Earth.'

It was hilarious how long ago that was.

It had been a month since his scheduled rest time began, and to be frank, he was bored out of his whits.

'Do all practitioners end up developing ADHD? I think it's a consequence of the profession.'

He couldn't focus on the Sanctuary due to its...special situation.

Disregarding his own thoughts and fears, the Sanctuary was constantly being filled with new worlds. It wasn't hard to know where they came from after he saw what the Soul Emperor was up to back then.

He could even speculate on the universe's situation based on their arrival.

But it wasn't time yet.

Not because of fear, but because he was certain he wouldn't be able to stand still when he found out the truth.

He needed to be selfish for a little longer. He needed to train himself a little longer.

He understood the urgency of the situation. It wasn't like Damien was unaware of how greedy his thoughts were.

But, as he'd figured before, there was nothing he could do anyway, so knowing wouldn't help.

'I should trust Lynn. Things will be fine.'

If Elvira was his most reliable helper, Lynn was his great secretary. Ever since she entered the Sanctuary, she'd taken the role of general manager who oversaw the incorporation of new worlds and the maintenance of Sanctuarian society.

Without her, perhaps it would've become a reflection of Grand Heavens Boundary, but from what he sensed from the budding universe, it was nothing of the sort.

'Wow. I really just made a mess and left it for others to clean up. I should reward them when we meet again.'

Damien smiled to himself.

Then he frowned.

'Fuck, I'm bored again.'

His thoughts were entertaining, and other than that, his memories provided a semi-constant source of entertainment.

He was tired of meditation, so that option was off the table. He almost went to battle a few times, but forced himself not to in order to continue his training.

'This is actually a real problem. It was a joke at first, but I think I'd genuinely crumble if I had to spend a long period of time doing nothing.'

It was quite a funny problem to realize, but since it was a problem nonetheless, he became more serious in his "doing nothing" training.

'Still, 6 months is going to take forever.'

He sighed to himself for the umpteenth time.

A long and unavoidable time.

He had a feeling.

This was going to make him suffer more than anything he'd experienced to date.

Just as Damien became aware of the Soul Emperor's actions, the Soul Emperor realized early that someone was interfering with his plans.

How could he not?

He'd been harvesting worlds for years, but his yield wasn't nearly what he was expecting.

He originally didn't mind the disappearance of several worlds more than he needed to, judging it as an isolated incident and sending his minions to find the cause, but that changed after a period.

Because no matter how much he did, it kept happening!

Every time he plundered World Cores, or even when the Nox forces destroyed them altogether, some would slip through the cracks and vanish into oblivion.

And it couldn't be tracked regardless of what he tried, even if he personally intervened in the investigation.

It caused him a great deal of trouble.

More than anything else, he was being humiliated constantly.

The Soul Emperor was a man who never lost. Until Damien's arrival in the universe, he never made a single plan that failed.

But why was he experiencing failure so often now?!

"Nothing. There is no sign of anything."

The Soul Emperor was once again standing in the Abyss with a plethora of World Cores before him, this time from Soul World.

As always, more than half of them escaped his grasp at once, but...

He managed to catch one.

The last fish, before it slipped out of the net, was forced into submission by him. Its teleportation was canceled, and it experienced the poor fate of becoming his test subject.

He tore it apart.

He literally took apart the laws that created its structure and searched for any sign of alteration, but there was none.

After all, Damien's Celestial Mana Threads no longer led back to him.

They connected the worlds he bound to that hidden universe forming in the Void, away from even a Demigod's perception.

"Unpleasant."

The Soul Emperor's words came out as no more than a mutter, but they were filled with a seething killing intent that dyed the Abyss red.

His emotions were no longer under his control.

The Divinity he built on constant success felt like it was being slapped mercilessly every time such a situation took place.

If he couldn't solve it, perhaps he'd face setbacks in his personal practice as well!

"This cannot be allowed to continue."

He said it, but...

Just like a certain genius trapped in the lands of darkness, he felt a wall of impossibility.

A wall that told him he wouldn't find what he wanted regardless of what he did.

He tried everything already. He even tried to plant his aura on the World Core and allow it to escape, but as if it understood his plans, it remained, sacrificing itself for the greater good.

Was that even logical?!

The Soul Emperor gnashed his teeth in annoyance.

He hated this feeling.

He never had to feel it before.

No, there was one case.

The only person who could give him this feeling...

"Saint Emperor."

There wasn't another answer.

It was impossible for there to be.

Because in the entirety of existence in this lower universe, the only person stronger than him was the Saint Emperor.

"Is the problem from within? If it is that man, it is not impossible."

He had been targeting the denizens of Grand Heavens Boundary because he assumed one of their Demigods was messing with him.

But after years of finding nothing, the ludicrous thought in his mind was much more rational than it should've been.

The Saint Emperor had a track record.

Earlier, when he signed the 2-year ceasefire and restricted their entire race, setting back their plans immensely, was only one of such incidents.

In reality, throughout the course of history, the Saint Emperor had been meddling past his qualifications.

He acted as if he was on nobody's side but his own.

Whatever agenda he was trying to push was his only goal.

Even if he had to inhibit his own people, even if he had to push them into extinction, he would do so without hesitation.

So his involvement in such a matter...

'...is extremely likely.'

The Soul Emperor frowned heavily.

He finished his current tasks, sending the newly corrupted World Cores to a location unknown, and...

"I shall pay you a visit."

He set out.

To see whether or not he needed to add a new name to his death list.

Chapter 1195 Truth [3]

Damien had been thinking about the Sanctuary for a while, but he hadn't actually visited it in several years.

Even he was underestimating its current state.

Hustle and bustle filled the budding universe.

After the first 300,000 worlds were added, Lynn had a mountain of work on her shoulders, but she took care of it as she said she would.

With Avalon as her base of operations, she managed logistics for the entire sector-sized universe without a hitch.

Well, after a period of turmoil.

It wasn't easy to get people to accept their new accommodations.

Even if their worlds moved here willingly, they were separated into a new place with no knowledge of where they were or what kind of person ruled them.

Naturally, not many could accept this easily.

In the beginning, there was a lot of rebellion. The leaders of those worlds who considered themselves strong refused to subordinate themselves to a new lord.

However, this period didn't last more than a few months.

Elvira and the rest of the Emperors, along with the army they raised, were a force to be reckoned with.

As the administrators of this realm, these leaders had power that others couldn't imagine.

After showcasing it just a bit, they were able to control the majority of the population through fear.

But of course, this strategy didn't work in the long term.

Damien had no interest in building a universe that was filled with internal conflict, a place that raised villains like Immortal Blood Asura.

Perhaps he wouldn't interfere in the direction of their growth, but that was only if it remained positive.

He wouldn't allow these people to ruin the universe he worked so hard to build.

Lynn, as his proxy, understood this well.

Therefore, once the larger problems were quelled, she started instating laws and other means to establish order.

In its simplest form, it was a system of rewards and consequences, but the types of rewards and consequences she offered were so enticing or terrifying that people couldn't help but follow.

It was the start of an era of change.

The fear built up at the start gradually diminished, and as the systems in place for the management of worlds became more refined, the overall satisfaction of the new Sanctuarians only grew.

And then the war started in full.

When the World Cores from the Giant Domain arrived, they were just shells. Their people had gone extinct long ago, and they'd come in hopes of starting over.

The sight of tens of thousands of uninhabited worlds, desolate and empty, was jarring.

And that was only the start.

When those from the Beast Domain joined, and those from the Soul World came later, people began to realize the gift they'd been granted in this place.

When they encountered survivors of the tragedies that struck those sectors and learned of the situation outside, their thoughts on the Sanctuary completely changed for the better.

Because, as its name suggested, this was a haven.

A place of peace.

And none could ruin that peace.

The unity they shared heightened immensely, and Lynn's position became nigh-god-like.

After all, she was both the creator and keeper of peace.

However, she made it clear what her role was.

To the people of the Sanctuary, she was not a God, but a God's apostle.

They had never met the God who created this place. In their minds, he was just a hazy figure, nothing more than an overarching presence that could be felt but not seen.

But Lynn was here.

Nevertheless, dealing with survivors of the catastrophes of the outside world was difficult enough. Lynn couldn't handle it all alone.

She and Elvira formed a perfect team. Their synergy allowed Lynn to focus on the Sanctuary's internal matters while Elvira coordinated their external movements.

Together, they turned this place into a prosperous land unlike any other.

And with its population came many more benefits.

Hidden realms and dimensions started to form in the Sanctuary, which provided growth opportunities to the younger generation.

Along with them, the variety of resources present on the Wild Continent were used to populate manmade Mystic Realms that housed the legacies of old emperors and other great treasures.

It was all coming together.

When viewed from the current position in the timeline, the Sanctuary was already its own self-sustaining universe.

"Even if we do nothing and he stops helping, this place will grow on its own."

The one who spoke was none other than Elvira.

She and Lynn just finished another meeting about miscellaneous duties in the universe, and were currently gazing out into its depths mindlessly.

It was truly incomprehensible when one stopped to think about it, and as people who'd been here for so long, they didn't do so often.

But it really was a universe of its own.

A universe created by a single man.

"Do you think the outside world was created like this?" She asked in wonder.

It was stupid, but she couldn't help but entertain the thought.

"If it was, would it be in its current predicament?"

Lynn's answer followed logic as she always had.

"I guess not, but..."

"Haa..."

Elvira stopped herself.

Just thinking about the outside situation was tiring. It was a miracle that they hadn't incurred too many losses until now.

"No, it is not a miracle. This is the benefit of being associated with an Apostle."

Lynn spoke as if she could read her thoughts.

"He is definitely miraculous, but not to this extent, right? No matter what, he is still a human."

"Human...?" Lynn muttered.

"I wonder about that."

Could a person born from the love of two great Gods be considered human even if that was his lineage?

It was hard to say.

"Plus, this is not his own effect, but the effect of the one backing him. It is mystical. To think 'that thing' could hold emotions. I can't even fathom it."

The Void was a concept Lynn didn't know much about, but she understood its actions based on the past.

It had never shown such movements before.

To provide Damien with so much luck that it directly helped those around him, to help him maintain and build a force like this one...

Just what did the Void want from him?

It was troubling to think about what the future had in store for them.

Perhaps, the Nox were just an appetizer to let them understand the cruelty of reality within the little bubble he'd created for them.

"Say, when do you think he will come back?"

Lynn glanced over at Elvira.

A slight smile formed on her lips.

This woman...

'Never mind. It's better not to say anything.'

"It won't be long. It's already been this long, so..."

"...with less than a month left of imprisonment, do you think he won't come here to understand what happened while he was gone?"

"Mm..."

Elvira nodded with a complicated expression on her face.

She hesitated to speak.

She wanted to say something, but at the same time, she didn't want it to be said.

But in the end...

"I..."

"Hm? What's going on here? You guys having a meeting without me?"

The two women's senses immediately went on alert as they finally sensed the presence that had been behind them for who knows how long.

They almost went into battle mode, but that voice...

They turned around with shock on their faces.

"I'm getting a little jealous."

A man stood behind them with a wide grin.

What kind of timing was this?!

Just the devil, he finally appeared when they called his name.

Damien Void had returned to the Sanctuary.

Chapter 1196 Truth [4]

Damien's return to society should've been celebrated greatly, but he didn't allow Elvira and Lynn to spread the news.

After all, his current visit would be a short one.

His original doubt of whether or not entering the Sanctuary would count as abandoning his post was solved quite easily when he put his mind to it, but not completely.

He could come as long as his clones were active outside, but if he left for too long, his clones would disperse and his presence would truly leave No Return Pass, which...wouldn't be good for anyone.

But, he was happy he came.

The fresh air of this place and the homely feeling of the universe's laws hugging him was more refreshing than anyone, and seeing the faces of those he'd been missing and worrying about eased his heart.

'My entrance was greater than expected. Who would've thought they'd be talking about me?' He thought to himself with a grin.

He was obviously planning to make a surprise entrance, but the timing was absolute perfection.

And...

While Lynn didn't show it, being a woman who hardly ever dropped her cold exterior, Elvira was extraordinarily warm, giving him a proper welcome home.

The second she realized his presence wasn't an illusion, she rushed forward and pulled him into a hug.

Damien's eyes widened.

"This..."

"Shut up and accept it. We've missed you."

"Hmm..."

Damien smiled. His relationship with Elvira was...subtle, but she'd never done something like this before.

"I'll allow it for now."

He wrapped his arms around her and embraced her warmth for a few seconds before separating.

"How's everyone doing? It hasn't been too hard, right?"

"Hah, you're saying that to provoke us, right? There can't be another reason.

Damien turned to Lynn with his head tilted curiously.

"Hm? What could you possibly mean by that?"

"Tch, you're always the same."

"Would you like it better if I changed?"

"No, and that's why it sucks."

"Hahahaha!"

Damien laughed jovially.

He'd wholeheartedly missed an atmosphere like this.

"I'd love to catch up with you, but we have plenty of time to do that later. I guess I have a few visits to make first."

"Mm," Elvira responded understandingly.

"Putting the rest aside, Xue'er has missed you dearly. She hasn't stopped talking about you since the last time you left."

"Ah..."

Damien's expression turned wry.

The more his schedule tightened, the less time he had to spend with her.

'She's an adult now, huh...'

It was genuinely ridiculous to think about.

That little girl was an adult?

It was impossible in his mind.

It almost made him scared to go see her, but that was just an "almost."

After bidding goodbye to Elvira and Lynn, he immediately made his way to Theavel.

Not only to see his little sister, but also the rest of the family he'd built through his travels.

He paid special visits to Lucius, Bai Yuxuan, Feng Yuxiang, Bianca Snow, Tephit, and even Elitra, who'd somehow become a leader amongst the younger generation despite her...strange personality.

He was delighted to see the growth of his people. It was a surprising feeling, considering how he tried to remain uninvolved with their matters and let them grow on their own.

But no matter what it was, it made him so happy his Mind Prison defenses almost broke and let his ego flood back into his mind.

More than anyone else though, he spent time with Xue'er.

At this point, she was already around 20. She had grown up into a beautiful young woman, and her power already surpassed most of her elders.

Damien only had two or three days to spend here. It wasn't enough at all.

But he did everything he could with it.

Everything had changed.

The Sanctuary wasn't the Sanctuary he knew anymore, and the people he knew had evolved into more mature forms of himself that were entertaining to see.

But it pronounced his feeling of being separated from society severely.

It made him feel like he was the only one standing still in this ever-changing world.

But perhaps even he was changing in ways he couldn't see.

Day turned to night and night turned to day. Xue'er happily took Damien around the Sanctuary and showed him the sights he hadn't seen, and throughout the entire time, she never mentioned her grievance.

She was old enough to understand him. Rather than holding a grudge, she felt sorrow at his situation and wished she could do more to help.

Nevertheless, it was a time of peace.

By the time Damien returned to Elvira and Lynn, a day and a half had passed.

He had to break the peace now.

He had to face the reality he'd been avoiding for the past 5 years.

'Hmm...'

As he followed the two women through Avalon and listened to their updates on the Sanctuary's progress, he spread his senses to feel for foreign presences.

Unfortunately, there were none.

'Have they not come since I left? Or perhaps it's just been a long time.'

He shook his head.

'No, perhaps it's better that way.'

He wanted to have the warm reunion he'd been waiting for, but now wasn't the time.

He came here to understand what was happening outside.

Because there were only 26 days before his imprisonment period ended.

Shouldn't he start preparing to re-enter the scene?

Elvira, Lynn, and Damien walked until they made it to the same office where Damien and Lynn had their past conversation about his mother.

They sat comfortably on the couches on the side wall instead of moving to the desk, and their conversation began.

"I know you're curious about what's been happening to me, but we'll have to save that for later. I need to know."

The two women's expressions fell slightly.

The mood was jovial until then, filled with the air of reminiscence, but such an atmosphere wouldn't be able to continue any longer.

It was truly a shame.

"Do we have to start now? Can we not take a few days to rest first?" Elvira asked.

Even though she understood how meaningless her words were, she still felt the urge to say them.

Damien smiled apologetically.

'As expected, they've been suffering.'

He felt bad for putting them back into the solemn feeling they'd held for who knows how long, but there was no choice.

"I have to know. Just how bad has it gotten?"

Elvira hesitated, glancing over at Lynn, who sighed.

'Of course it's going to be pushed onto me.'

She straightened her back and fixed her expression, looking Damien directly in the eye as she started speaking.

"Bad is an understatement. Viewing the overall situation, it can be considered abominable."

With yet another sigh, Lynn began explaining from the start.

From the relatively stable war from when Damien first left, to what was currently taking place, now that hope had become faint.

There wasn't much fluctuation in Damien's expression.

No, it only got worse and worse with every word she spoke.

The more he heard, the more his anger boiled, and the more his emotions fell out his his control.

The current situation...

He couldn't really speak on it as an outsider.

But hearing about it...

...frankly, it was numbing.

Chapter 1197 Truth [5]

Damien's mind returned to the dark reality of his position.

'The Giant Domain, Beast Domain, and Soul World are all gone. Eien has been completely broken through. No Return Pass is the last unbroken point.'

He closed his eyes as he came to a realization.

This was the truth of war.

No matter how fiercely he defended the No Return Pass, it didn't mean anything. Trillions of enemies could die by his blade, but trillions more would move around him and kill those standing behind him.

Whether it be the Blood-Drenched Wilderness, the Graveyard Sanctuary, the Ephemeral Border Stele, or any of the other territories of the universe's ring of defense, they'd been plowed through and left to rot.

At one point, these checkpoints all carried the presence of at least a few tens of thousands of Nine Revolutions masters, but now they were all dead or retreated to the bounds of the remaining universe.

The Nox pierced the biggest protection mechanism Grand Heavens Boundary possessed, and now that they were flooding into the universe, the war situation had taken a massive turn.

The war split into two fronts, one of the older generation and one of the younger generation.

Those who had reached the limits of their potential with age continued to fight battle upon battle filled with bloody slaughter, but it wasn't nearly as one-sided as it was previously.

Meanwhile, the experts of the universe were forced to show their allegiance. Those who turned traitor had to completely switch sides, which helped the allied forces create a united front they had been lacking before.

Now, the war looked a lot more like a competition.

The Demigods suppressed each other, forces of the same skill level fought directly, and the younger generation was tasked with controlling the momentum of the entire war with their battle.

After all, wasn't it natural to compare whose future had more potential?

Whether this situation was good or bad, Damien couldn't say.

However, he knew for certain that the universe's forces weren't acting at their full capacity.

Of the original three leaders of Heaven's Army, only one remained, and he barely had any power.

The other two were replaced by lizards wearing faces that didn't belong to them.

Order was in pieces, and the efficacy of the army was treacherous.

Because of this, people were needlessly dying.

'I've been more concerned about people's deaths recently.' Damien thought to himself as he chugged a gourd full of spirit liquor.

Although he said it, he knew it wasn't true. No matter how much he experienced, the indifference in his very core wouldn't change.

His concern wasn't the people, but what those people represented.

They were life. Their karma and fates intertwined and wove the fabric of the universe. The foundational elements found pillars in these people, and this was what allowed the universe to continue functioning.

The relationship between the universe and its inhabitants was symbiotic in the same way a World Core needed its surface population for survival as well.

Damien sighed. Until this point, he'd always been pulled into the "flow" of things. From his start on Earth to Apeiron, his fall into the Divine Realm, and even further than that, his actions always followed a set pattern.

As for who set this pattern? Even Damien didn't know. He had an inexplicable feeling that he couldn't pinpoint despite the impossible level he'd reached.

Universal Flow, which he originally thought was the flow that guided him, was only a part of it. The flow of the universe gave him direction in exchange for his help, but it didn't give him the immense luck and opportunity he possessed in general.

Nevertheless, if he couldn't find out now, he had no need to think about it too much.

All he needed to know now was that he had to hold up his end of the bargain.

For his own sake and for the sake of the universe that birthed him, housed him, and provided him the talent to reach this step, Damien didn't mind shouldering the entire war on his back.

It was a strange thing that gradually changed once he became a Celestial. He could no longer view worlds and universes, celestial existences, as mere objects.

The way he felt about the universe...the intrinsic bond he felt between them...it was like he was a grandchild being fostered and doted on by his grandparent.

And what sane grandchild would allow their grandparent to be killed off so easily? If Damien could help it, he'd take the entire universe into the Sanctuary to protect it from harm.

But this wasn't possible. And even if it was, it wouldn't solve the underlying problem.

The only thing Damien could do was heave another sigh as he stood up. His position was given to him by Immortal Blood Asura. Even if he wanted to play a more proactive part in this war, he didn't have the chance to.

If he left the No Return Pass, he'd die. This place was a graveyard chosen specifically for him.

But he had no interest in dying early.

While No Return Pass was hell for others, it was a perfect training ground for Damien. The limitless stream of Nox Beings constantly enhanced his Legend while also providing him battle experience, answers, and a target on which he could test his ever-improving comprehensions.

With the Void backing him, he didn't even need to worry about fatigue, and with the Mind Prison, his mentality could remain untouched by worry or other useless feelings.

For the past 1800 days, Damien faithfully moved towards his goals. He built his strength and bid his time. He couldn't directly influence the war effort, nor did he know the exact situation of the outside world, but he knew the worlds he saved from the Soul Emperor were proof of his contribution.

There was less than a month left in his imprisonment, and this was the first time in almost 5 years that he released his mind from its shackles.

The feelings of longing, of worry, of desolateness...these feelings overtook his mind for a period.

He smiled as a magical yet completely unrealistic future weaved itself into his thoughts, as if trying to counter his anxiety.

'When my situation finally stabilized, I'll leave this place triumphantly and return to my people with pride!'

'Together, we'll end this damn war!'

"...if only it could be that simple."

These were just illusions created by his intense feelings.

In reality, hope for something so beautiful no longer existed.

Rumble!

The ground rumbled and quaked chaotically. From beyond the abyss, hundreds of millions of Nox Beings raucously charged through No Return Pass. Their only goal was to carve a path forward regardless of life and death.

But Damien had already stood up for this very purpose. He even managed to complete a round of light stretches before they entered the danger zone.

With time ticking down, he put away his clones and started fighting on his own again.

It was nice to really feel the experience before it was over, right?

No, it was better to say he needed an outlet to let go of his rage:

So when the time finally came for him to fight...?

The Space-Time River appeared dazzlingly in the sky, its shimmering starlight raining down on the ground below.

Yet another slaughter was slowly beginning in this isolated and desolate pass.

Chapter 1198 Truth [6]

From that day onward, Damien maintained regular contact with Elvira and Lynn to understand how the situation was progressing.

Every day, he'd visit the Sanctuary for a few hours to converse with them, as well as to visit Xue'er and help guide her in her training while he could.

The more he heard, the harder it was to stay still.

'Luciel has been slowly gaining control, which is good. The situation isn't nearly as dire anymore, but...'

It was no longer a fight between Grand Heavens Boundary and the Nox, but one between Luciel's loyalists and everyone else.

As the days passed, more and more traitors started to reveal their allegiance.

The truth behind the Great Commanders of Heaven's Army was discovered by the Sanctuarian troops a few months ago, but it came to light soon enough.

After all, at the decisive moment, both fake commanders showed their true faces and ruined the integrity of Heaven's Army for good.

The organization known as "Heaven's Army" had already been disassembled in the past month, and those who still held the desire to fight had moved to Luxurion to join Luciel's camp along with the dwarves who resided in Hephaestus.

The current situation was as such.

The Divine Realm was the universe's territory, while Hephaestus was being used as a Nox base.

The Infernal Realm was the main battlefield, with the demons splitting to both sides based on their allegiance.

Meanwhile, the Human Domain was still untouched.

No matter how many defenses Damien put up before he left, and no matter how strong the natural barriers were, it was impossible to keep the Nox out forever.

But when their scouting parties finally snuck between the spatial layers and entered the sector, they found that it was practically empty!

There were only 6 worlds left in the entirety of the domain, an incomprehensible sight.

When news made it back to the Nox...

Surprisingly, there wasn't any movement.

In fact, these scouting parties reported back to the Inhuman Emperor and Soul Emperor, as the Saint Emperor had yet to involve his forces and the Karmic Emperor was focusing his efforts on Hephaestus.

The Inhuman Emperor couldn't have cared less about the nuances of the situation. If there weren't people to satisfy his and his people's desires, there was no point in pursuing the matter.

After all, he was the truest form of a barbaric warmonger. He wasn't an idiot, he simply didn't care to use his brain for such matters.

Carnage was his only goal, so why should he?

Meanwhile, on the Soul Emperor's side, things were more complex.

His purpose for collecting World Cores was not a mystery. Every Nox who'd unlocked their bloodline memories to a certain degree understood where those cores were going.

However, speaking of it was prohibited due to the "curse."

It didn't matter anyway. Most of them didn't have the power to interfere nor the will to do so.

All except one.

His suspicions of the Saint Emperor became far more severe once this information came to him, and the divide between the two Nox camps increased.

When he went to visit the Saint Emperor, the man himself didn't say anything to confirm or deny his accusations, which only made him more suspicious.

This was all a game to that man.

If inhibiting the Soul Emperor's plans made that game more fun, he would absolutely do it.

So, instead of focusing on the "why" behind the Humann Domain's state, he created the "why" himself.

Regardless, this wasn't yet known to anyone but himself and the Saint Emperor, and the Human Domain was put aside as all sides lost their desire to use it.

'The question right now is simple. Where am I going to be most useful?'

Damien could absolutely re-enter the universe and lend his efforts to the war. He could likely save a few billion more people by doing so, an achievement to be proud of.

But his gut told him this wasn't the way forward.

'No matter what Luciel does, he can't win against an unending enemy. The more they show their longevity, the more people will switch sides, and the situation will continuously become more unfavorable.'

"Tch."

Damien gnashed his teeth.

This severe situation caused by fear and panic, it was slowly turning into another impossibility.

He couldn't accept it.

The last impossibility he faced could only be solved with time and a spark of inspiration, but this one...

'I'll do it myself.'

A month ago, he decided to let go of the Mind Prison and embrace his emotions again. As his ego flooded back into his mind and brought it to life, the variety of emotions that populated his head culminated into a single product.

Fatigue.

He was tired of it.

This unending war, these insects he'd been seeing more than anything else for the past five years, he was tired of it all.

He could no longer trust the universe to take care of itself.

'Rose's Judgement Order is something to be praised, but their power isn't enough yet. They'll only be able to make proper waves with time.'

And time was a commodity right now.

How could he help the situation best?

The answer was obvious.

He was Damien Void, he was the Void's Apostle, a man beyond the reach of those within and without the universe.

They didn't have the right to piss him off this much.

'Recently, things have been getting interesting.'

It seemed some had given up and were getting desperate.

There were some Demigods on the universe side that tried to attack lower existences and pull their peers into the Ancient Battlefield, since the presence of Demigods became something that only benefitted the Nox.

But, they hadn't been successful.

The Nox had their own Demigod Lords and the traitors who came to their side.

The universe's Demigods couldn't move covertly no matter what they tried, so every attempt they made was inhibited by a member of their own class, foiling their plans easily.

'The Ancient Battlefield, huh...'

A plan started forming in Damien's head.

A grin formed on his face.

"This is insane..." he muttered.

But his grin didn't go away.

In fact, it only became wider and wider.

'If I do that, I'll be able to kill two birds with one stone...'

'...well, maybe it'll become three.'

The best way to use the Void Apostle's strength in the current time was simple.

"I'm going to Al'Katra."

The hidden motherworld of the Nox, the place that spawned these disgusting vermin.

"I feel bad for not taking Orion along as promised, but...I don't really have time to grab him, do I?"

Damien looked up into the blackness of the sky.

It didn't vary much from the blackness of the earth or the walls to either side, but for this moment, he felt it necessary to stare into its depths.

"Five..."

"Four..."

"Three..."

"Two..."

"One."

Crash!

The sound was indiscernible, but it was incredibly clear in Damien's ears.

The sound of 5 years officially passing.

The sound of his shackles shattering and freeing his soul.

"Then, I'll leave this place to you."

"Do not worry, My Lord. We will not let anyone trespass until your return."

"Return, huh..."

Damien smiled.

"Don't worry about that. When the situation becomes unfavorable, leave directly. There will be someone else to clean the mess once you leave."

"Pardon?"

"Don't worry about it."

Damien turned his head to face them.

Tephit and the Sea Races, Lucius and the Demons, and Bai Yuxuan and the Dragons.

These three forces would hold the fort for him while he was gone.

"Well then, until next time."

He smiled once more and turned to the Abyss he'd been facing for the past five years.

He took his first steps.

Towards the desire he'd held for more than a decade at this point.

It was finally time to enter the Abyss...

"...and crush their fucking skulls."

Chapter 1199 Mysteries [1]

The main reason the Abyss remained unexplored was obviously due to its inherent dangers.

From the uneven time distribution where every second could equate to hundreds of years in the universe, to the threatening atmosphere that tried to suffocate one from all sides, it was overall a place that did not welcome the presence of universe denizens.

The worst part of it all was the inability to gather mana. The mana of the Abyss was too corrupted for consumption, so once one's internal mana capacity ran out, only their bodily defenses could protect them from the dangers.

And with the Abyss constantly changing, it was nigh impossible to find one's way back to the universe after entering it.

Unless one had the luck of the entire universe in their hands, it was bad enough to be considered genuinely impossible.

But those weren't the only problems.

There was no motivation for the people of the universe to make their way into uncharted territory.

It was possible to find random Nox settlements during one's travels, but the location of Al'Katra remained hidden from all for generations.

It was as if even the Nox didn't know where their homeworld was located.

So pursuing them into that treacherous territory held no benefit.

Without benefit, when did anyone move?

However, what inhibited the rest of the universe didn't apply to Damien.

Putting aside the Abyss' dangers, he held the capability to replenish his mana even in that unknown territory.

And more than anything else, he knew where Al'Katra was.

The reason the universe had never been able to pinpoint its location was because they focused too much on known logic and tried to define the Abyss through it.

The approach wouldn't be incorrect in usual cases, but this was not a usual case in the slightest.

Al'Katra did not move on a linear path, or one with any sense at all.

It was never in the same place, nor were there any landmarks orbiting it that could be tracked.

In fact, Al'Katra's irregular movement that cloaked its location in randomness was only normal in the Abyss.

The Abyss itself was ever-changing, never permanently following a single pattern, so obviously the worlds within would be the same.

To track an object in an area that was already unmapped when it was constantly shifting position was naturally impossible, but after five years of devouring Nox and patching their memories together, Damien circumvented this impossibility.

As he found in the Trial World all those years ago, Damien couldn't incorporate the Nox bloodline.

He had to collect it and store it elsewhere whenever he devoured them, which caused a problem for him.

But with the growth of the Void, he gained an unprecedented power of "falsification."

From the moment he succeeded in gaining new affinities by transmuting the Void's energy, he mastered this power.

And with it...

"Huu..."

Void Mana flooded Damien's bloodstream, dying it black.

'Nox Bloodline...I know it well.'

He had more than enough in storage to research, so mimicking it wasn't a problem.

'Demon Transformation.'

His body changed form. His hair turned white and his skin paled until it was an ash-grey color. His height ballooned almost a foot, and his body was covered in tattoo-like blood runes.

It had been a while since he used this transformation, but he gained it from a Nox, so using it now made the following processes much simpler.

In a matter of seconds, Damien became indistinguishable from a Nox Supreme.

'I can feel it.'

When the memories he stole combined with the "Nox" bloodline in his body, a path formed.

A path that led straight to Al'Katra.

'As long as I follow this, I'll make it there even if that place decides to run all the way to the ends of existence.'

The material preparations were finished, and in the time he took to do so, his mental preparations were also completed.

He was ready to embark on this journey.

He walked through No Return Pass slowly, but every step he took seemed to take him several hundred thousand kilometers forward.

Until he reached the end of the earth, staring out into a wall of blackness.

He couldn't see anything. Not the Nox who would constantly invade him, and not the "depth" that the Abyss should've possessed.

It was a solid wall of blackness.

Yet, when he reached his hand out, it passed through the wall like it didn't exist.

'This...'

Damien took another deep breath.

'...is going to be an experience.'

He took another step.

And his body disappeared into the Abyss.

Unbeknownst to him, his disappearance into that space had more than just a small impact.

In several areas of the universe, people looked out into the distance with strange emotions present on their faces.

Those who had connections to him, whether physical or ethereal, felt his embarkment.

Ruyue clutched her chest with a frown.

It was almost suffocating.

The wisp of soul she shared with him felt like it disappeared.

She knew it was present, but this feeling...

"We need to go to the Sanctuary.

Rose and Elena nodded solemnly.

They felt it through their rings as well.

Something had happened, and they needed to know what.

While the three women pursued the truth, others could only stand in confusion.

They didn't know exactly what was going on, but they could feel it.

A massive change was about to take place.

With Damien Void at its center.

'Hmm...'

It wasn't anything like he expected it to be.

Considering the way it was perceived by the universe, Damien expected the Abyss to be a place with nothing but blackness and danger, but it wasn't anything of the sort.

Well, somewhat.

His danger sense was definitely blaring more than ever before.

His senses were telling him that any movement he made would lead him to peril.

However, it was not entirely black.

It took several minutes for his eyes to adjust to the environment, but once they did, the blackness faded to the background.

The Abyss was actually filled with activity.

"Huu..."

Damien took a breath of air.

No, he took a breath of the Abyss. There was no such thing as air here.

Concepts like that had been diluted into completely different variations that hardly held similarities to their original forms.

However...

'It's beautiful.'

The swirling darkness was not a manifestation of emptiness.

Perhaps it was because he was a Celestial, but Damien could perceive it all around him.

This place was filled with energy.

Tens or hundreds or even thousands of energies all mingled together and meshed in ways they were not supposed to, creating the corrupted blackness of the Abyss.

Just by standing here, Damien felt his state of mind heightening crazily.

'I see...I see...'

The phrase kept repeating in his mind.

He understood now.

Why the Nox's mana was like that, some truths about the universe, and more than anything...

'...the ever-so-slight presence of the Void.'

He just stepped into this place, so he couldn't say he was truly in the Abyss right now.

Instead—

'—it's better to say I'm standing in the ruins of a destroyed universe.'

Damien's heart was practically beating through his chest.

'It seems...'

'...this trip is going to be far more bountiful than expected.'

30 minutes.

By judging his internal body clock, Damien could tell that only 30 minutes had passed for him.

But...

He had to be curious.

Was the Abyss' environment truly as chaotic as they claimed?

He could no longer see the way back to No Return Pass.

He was standing still, but it already vanished from not only his sight, but the very ends of his perception.

'I wonder...just how much time has passed in the universe?'

Chapter 1200 Mysteries [2]

5 months.

That's how long it had been since Ruyue and the girls traveled to the Sanctuary for the first time in several years and learned what had happened in the month prior.

From Damien's movements within the Sanctuary where he organized his forces and prepared for reasons unknown to him pulling Tephit and the rest into No Return Pass to take his place, they learned everything.

Including his descent into the Abyss.

It was a hard pill to swallow.

Damien's actions practically screamed his distrust for the universe's forces.

If he felt the need to take such a harrowing journey alone, what did that mean for them?

Naturally, none of them believed he was abandoning them or thought they were useless. He'd left several treasures with Elvira for them to use to boost the Judgement Order to a higher level.

The evident problem was the speed of their growth.

According to Elvira and the rest, they could no longer see through Damien's strength, which meant he was already close to the highest level.

So, his departure served as the best motivator for them.

They had been chasing his shadow for years now, hoping to stand by his side instead of protecting his back, but they'd been unsuccessful to date.

They reached a point where he could entrust the universe's safety to them until his return, but that wasn't where they wanted to be.

It would take time.

They also understood it would be impossible to rapidly match up to him.

But as long as they could reach the level they wished for by the end of this war, it would be enough.

The Judgement Order became more active from that point on.

Instead of getting involved every so often to stabilize battlefields, they directly interfered in every battle possible to raise their strength and standing.

In the current war situation, their presence was integral.

The battlefield of the younger generation had moved back to the previous mechanic of the Dimensional Leaderboard.

While direct confrontation still took place frequently, the most important factor for guiding the momentum of this war was to raise their positions in a way the entire universe could see.

And luckily, they had the opportunity to do so now.

In the past 5 months, as battle within the universe became prominent and invasion from the outside was less of an issue, the war became more territorial, like the wars most people were used to.

The Infernal Realm was continuously changing its topography based on who had the lead, but thus far, neither side had been able to completely penetrate their enemy.

At a time like this, it became important to understand the structure of Grand Heavens Boundary itself.

Considering ordinary logic, it was utterly incomprehensible, but there was a reason for that.

Like the Abyss, but to a far lesser extent, the universe's shape was ever-changing.

The exterior domains that bordered the Divine and Infernal Realms were never constantly a single shape, and whenever they were destroyed, their sister sectors would morph to fill the gaps as they could.

In this way, even the Divine and Infernal Realms had no constant shape.

The universe's structure instead worked on a system of rules.

At all times, the Divine and Infernal Realms would remain on the interior, bordered by the rest however they needed to be to make this work.

This system only failed when the number of periphery domains was taken down to two. The Human Domain and Hephaestus could no longer support the logic that kept the Angel and Demon domains protected.

That's how the Nox gained an opportunity to flood into the universe, and that was the reason they had to destroy so many sectors before gaining the ability to do so.

However, if they lost Hephaestus, their plans would be severely inhibited.

Because Hephaestus was a periphery domain, its changing shape gave them a plethora of openings to attack from. The tactical advantages of the domain, combined with its fortification, made it a prime location for a stronghold, which was why it was used by Heaven's Army in the first place.

Therefore, the current goal of the universe's older generation was to push the Nox out of Hephaestus, or in a worst-case scenario, separate Hephaestus from the rest of the universe.

There was a considerable amount of strategizing and scheming taking place behind the scenes for this purpose.

Luciel regained his control over the denizen forces when this chapter of the war began, and under his command, the loyal supporters who followed him were able to create a force that far surpassed the Heaven's Army of the past.

And the main reason for this was unity.

The ability to fight without having to worry about being stabbed in the back was life-changing to the point of being miraculous.

Regardless of the Nox's current advantages, which included a large number of denizen forces who betrayed the universe, those who remained stalwart were able to fight back equally instead of being overwhelmed.

And when it came to Demigods...

The usual situation was the same as ever, but for two specific Demigods, everything changed in the past few months.

Tian Yang and the Golden Dragon Emperor.

Tian Yang's Divinity had been shattered for a very long time. It took place several thousand years ago during a defining battle of his life, with an enemy he swore revenge on.

In fact, Tian Yang wasn't always a lonely man. He once had a wife and child of his own who were his whole world.

But back then, they were both cruelly slaughtered by his enemies.

In order to get revenge, he stormed their stronghold and slaughtered them all with his people, but in the process of killing the one who ordered the deaths of his family, his own Divinity was shattered beyond repair.

The Golden Dragon Emperor's situation was different, but the end result was the same.

They were fated to live as wastes for the rest of their lives, unable to have any place in the current apocalypse.

However, everything changed that day.

When Beast Emperor Star was moved to the Divine Realm.

That day, they heard a vague voice in their ears. They couldn't make out what it said, nor could they perceive the speaker, but that voice was laced with sadness and sorrow beyond compare, a bleak loneliness that was utterly incomprehensible to anyone other than the one who felt it.

When that voice entered their ears, and the energy of its speaker blessed their bodies...

They received a "chance."

A chance to return to their former glory.

A chance to restore their shattered Divinities.

They understood this as soon as they woke up, but they were not able to thank or even find the one who gave them such a magisterial gift.

So, they decided to use it to its fullest.

They regained a majority of their power in the time since then, but instead of directly ascending back to their previous posts, they maintained themselves on the edge of Divinity so they could directly control the war situation!

Now, the two of them stood at the forefront.

With their armies behind them, facing enemies who had no chance against their might as former Divinities, they entered yet another battle.

The fate of the universe that once looked so bleak it was meaningless to fight at all...

...was now in their hands.

And they had no plans of letting it stay that way.