

Void 1211

Chapter 1211 Al'Katra [2]

"So this is it..."

Damien's voice was silenced by the Abyss, but it didn't matter.

Because with the passing of 4 months, he was finally here.

"...Al'Katra."

He couldn't help but marvel at it.

The world itself could barely even be called a world.

Yes, it shared a shape with regular worlds, as did it function similarly with a loose atmosphere encasing it and whatnot.

However, it was billions of kilometers wide, an unreasonable size.

It was so massive that Damien couldn't even see its curve on the horizon. As he looked at it from so close, it was like a massive wall that expanded in all directions as far as the eye could see.

Even when he was approaching it maintained this appearance.

It was actually insane.

'Well, now that I'm here, what's the point in delaying?'

In the past 4 months, Damien had already made several plans on how to move once he was on the surface, so he didn't need to sit here and ponder about anything.

In that time, he'd also taken several measures to hide his identity.

He took Abyss Mana into his body and combined it with the Void to make his breath smell like a Nox, and even if he used his mana, nobody would be able to distinguish him as a denizen of the universe.

This final preparation was made for two reasons.

First off, he had to be sure the Emperors wouldn't notice his abnormality upon entrance. If the Saint Emperor smelled the Void's scent in the slightest, he was sure to make moves that would complicate Damien's path.

The other reasons were similar to a smaller degree, but overall, Damien wasn't extremely worried.

After all, this was Al'Katra.

This world was undiscoverable by outsiders. It had not and could not be found, so the Nox naturally wouldn't have many defenses against enemies from the outside.

Though, considering their nature, he couldn't say the same about their preparations against internal threats, but he could only be sure about that fact once he made himself familiar with the surface.

Damien closed his eyes and concentrated his awareness into a thin string that he sent through the atmosphere.

Once he felt it connect to the ground, he warped.

His laws were currently not the same as the ones he used usually. Instead, they were the diluted and morphed versions that existed in the Abyss, similar to what Yong An utilized.

Of course, he decided to only use his spatial laws during this time, because he couldn't explain away his massive repertoire of abilities with a mere Demonic Providence.

Flash!

The feeling of teleportation was different. It was far less fluid, and it felt like the spatial corridor would throw him into a random location if he lost focus for even a single moment.

But Damien already got used to this during his journey.

Without a hitch, he reappeared on the surface of the world.

Ptui!

He immediately spit on the nearby ground.

The first breath of air he intook was disgusting. It was turbid and rancid, like the air around a rotting corpse.

As for the environment itself...

It was pure black.

The sky was covered in dark clouds, and even without them, there was no sun to provide light to the world. The desolated ground seemed unable to sustain any sort of life, and was incredibly familiar to him.

It was the exact same as No Return Pass.

In more ways than one.

The surroundings were teeming with Nox.

If Damien hadn't activated One With Dimension instantly upon entry, he would've been swarmed by them already.

But the numbers were truly unrealistic.

There wasn't a single portion of free ground in this plain. Billions or even trillions of Lesser Nox wandered without aim. They didn't even seem to attack each other often, merely walking around like zombies in the apocalypse.

Though, it wasn't as if there was no conflict.

The Lesser Nox were vessels of vice. Their natural instinct was to consume and gain power.

Therefore, while whatever was suppressing them was doing a good job, it didn't completely limit their freedom,

In several locations in the distance, Damien could see structures that looked like mountains.

But mountains they were not.

Instead, they were piles of Lesser Nox who were currently in the process of consuming each other to evolve.

'It seems they've regulated the locations of combat zones. If a Lesser Nox can't fight its urges any longer, it has to travel to one of those isolated areas to satisfy its urges.'

It was no wonder the ones around him were walking like that.

They were all desperately trying to find their way to a combat zone!

'Regardless, this isn't what I came for. They might be uncivilized in nature, but I don't believe those Higher Nox are content with living amongst their lessers.'

He already confirmed this fact through the actions of Nox in the universe. Not one time was there a Higher Nox that didn't try to form an influence after conquering a manmade structure and altering it to their taste.

'Hmm...I don't want to spread my awareness, but is there a better way to find one besides walking?'

The answer was no, but with his lack of information, he couldn't act rashly.

'Let's just suck it up for now.'

He started to move in a random direction, away from the nearest Lesser Nox feeding grounds.

He ran between the spatial layers for several hours without finding anything. Other than more and more feeding grounds, there wasn't a single other structure.

'With a world as big as this, it makes sense. I'll try flying.'

Instead of using mana, he summoned black demonic wings, a disguised form of his dragon wings, and shot into the air.

Once again, he found himself unable to see anything in the distance, but it was fine. His movement speed would be much faster this way.

Seven more hours passed like this, filled with nothing but what he'd already seen.

A terrifying understanding of the numbers the Nox possessed.

'A world of this size that's packed to this extent...disregarding the Higher Nox that probably number in the trillions, there should be at least a few quintillion Lesser Nox. The universe...'

The universe truly stood no chance against a force of this size.

'Which makes my goal here all the more important.'

Damien threw away his thoughts and continued to move. After so long, he finally saw a structure in the distance that looked different from the rest.

As he approached it, relief filled his veins.

It was a city.

Surrounded by massive walls at least a few kilometers in height, which themselves were teeming with Higher Nox guards, was a massive metroplex that was about the size of a country.

'Finally.'

Damien pondered for a second about how to enter, but soon realized there was no need to do too much.

The Nox were a simple people, and he already understood their habits well.

He undid his concealment while still too far away for them to perceive him before descending.

He landed in front of the walls that didn't seem to have any natural entrance and glared up at the guards.

"Open up before I kill you!"

His tone was brash and extremely arrogant, obviously annoying the guards.

"Who are you?!" A voice boomed down.

Damien rolled his eyes and snarled.

"Does it matter to you?! Open the fuck up before I come up there myself!"

"Tch! Fine, but don't cause trouble in here! Your strength is pathetic in front of our leaders!"

"Ha, pathetic?! We'll see about that. Unless your leader is my Lord, don't expect me to act politely!"

"Fuck! Not another one of these!"

The guards on the wall agonized over his presence, but they still granted him entry,

'It seems not everyone is directly affiliated to a Lord. But...my acting is on point?'

Damien smiled inwardly. He wasn't really acting like a Nox, more like the old version of him who was absorbed in death and destruction just like them.

The way the wall opened was...strange.

It didn't actually open at all, but Damien could feel that he could now pass through its surface without a hitch.

After glaring at the guards once more, he sauntered in with confidence.

'Nice.' He thought smilingly.

'Now, it's time to get some information.'

Chapter 1212 Al'Katra [3]

The structure of a Nox city, wasn't it quite curious?

These people who never got along with each other even when they did, just how could they live cohesively in an area without problems?

The answer was that they didn't.

It was regular for conflict to overtake an entire city as the Nox fought amongst themselves, but because Higher Nox were valuable, they weren't allowed to kill wantonly.

There were two mechanisms in place to make sure they followed the rules.

The first was a battle arena. A life-or-death stage that was supervised by nine revolutions Nox and would allow one to kill their enemies existed in every city, but there were several restrictions on its use so it couldn't be abused.

The second was a collection of Supremes. They acted as a deterrent force and the highest level of authority that kept the people in line through fear.

These two worked quite well together, and for the most part, wanton destruction wasn't a common occurrence.

However, harmony wasn't either.

The streets weren't empty as people had to go about their business, but there wasn't an air of friendliness or community present among them. Instead, it was as if all of them were walking through a den of enemies.

Their eyes darted side to side, they bumped into each other and provoked each other, and even the owners of food stalls and the likes would regularly beat people and force them to pay what they owed.

The longer Damien spent on Al'Katra, the more it felt like a post-apocalyptic world.

Nevertheless, his purpose wasn't to engage in cultural exchange with them.

He didn't care about the food they ate, which, as he found, was disgusting, and he didn't care about how they acted when they were in the safety of their homeworld.

He didn't care that they used Nox blood as currency, nor did he care about the ongoing tournament in the battle arena.

After using some of his extensive supply of Nox blood to get himself accommodations for the night, Damien quietly spread his senses through the city.

'There are...6 Supremes. It's annoying since they're so spread apart, but this distance should still be possible.'

Since he was here for work, he didn't plan to waste any time.

He immediately teleported out of his room and covertly arrived in the residence of one of the six Supremes.

'At my level, they aren't a problem anymore.'

Damien smiled.

Shik!

His arm went through the Supreme's neck.

That man didn't even notice his presence when he was right behind him.

'Give me your memories quickly so I can move on.'

Damien rapidly devoured the man and teleported away again.

He couldn't check them yet.

The Nox were connected in a hivemind. They couldn't see the exact cause of death, but the information that this Supreme was dead would transmit to the rest soon enough.

Before that, he had to clear this city and leave.

And that's exactly what he did.

Regardless of their power level or how close they were to Divinity, it was simple fact that there no longer existed a Supreme who could stand up to him, especially after his league was increased by the Universal Core.

It was a bit difficult since most of his power was sealed. Using only corrupted spatial laws, he had to get very creative with his methods.

However, his base strength was already at a level where he could defeat his peers with a single law.

The rest...

Well, they would be saved for a more appropriate opponent.

One by one, the Supremes fell without realizing how they died. Their memories flowed into Damien's spiritual world and created a black mass that he had yet to absorb.

And after the last one was killed, naturally, Damien had no more use for the city.

'I have the urge to just slaughter them after doing that for so long, but I should keep them alive for now. I still don't know how many of these guys will be useful in the future.'

That was his thought as he teleported away.

He didn't look for a new city right away, but instead landed somewhere deep in the abyssal deserts that the Lesser Nox occupied before concealing himself again and delving into his mind.

'Right, let's see what's up.'

Nox memories were always fragmented. No matter what he tried, he couldn't find a way to extract a full memory stream from a Nox being.

His original assumption was that it was a matter of the Abyss' environment, but after the truths he'd learned in the Abyss itself, his thoughts changed.

This mechanism was absolutely designed by the Nox's creators.

And it was incredibly annoying!

Luckily, the stronger Nox had more complete memories, and since he had the fragments of six Supremes in his hand, he gained as much as he could hope for.

According to these memories, cities like the one he found were rare in this world. They were strongholds within the Lesser Nox waves, mainly used by those who still wanted to grow and hadn't overcome their basic desires yet.

He learned quite a lot about Nox society despite his apparent disinterest in it, and he couldn't say it wasn't fascinating to understand how these beings lived.

After all, those Nox that were such a mysterious enemy for the people of the universe were now being unraveled to him in full.

But the culture was just a piece of memory he spent a brief time viewing.

In fact, while cities did exist all over the world, the strongest experts were concentrated elsewhere.

'This...this is....'

Damien's eyes widened in shock.

He only saw it for a single second, but its appearance was deeply entrenched in his mind already.

A massive facility the size of several worlds. It would've been impressive on its own, but majesty was totally overshadowed by the "thing" it surrounded.

It was built in a circle. That circle was much larger than a world on its own, if he had to guess, it took up a tenth of the entire surface area of Al'Katra, and it...

It was a massive pit.

A pit filled with blackness deeper than any other form of the concept.

That pit radiated an aura that terrified Damien to his core, almost giving him a feeling of reverence.

How long had it been since he felt this?

This kind of fear towards an unbeatable enemy.

Even the Nox Emperors were only stepping stones in his eyes at this point.

So what was that place that could terrify him so?

'The Demon Abyss.'

That was its name.

Considering its gait, it was quite the modest name.

However, this place held more significance than anything else.

'This is what I came here for.'

The Demon Abyss only had a single purpose as seen by the Nox.

That place...

That was the place that created them.

The Demon Abyss was precisely the reason for the Nox's infinite numbers.

It was a machine that pumped out Lesser Nox in the millions and billions and spread them across the world.

If it was that place...

'If I can destroy that...'

'...their numbers will become finite.'

...he could finally make a difference.

The Nox's greatest card, their greatest advantage over the universe...

Damien didn't need to think about anything else.

That was his aim.

He would wipe the Demon Abyss off the map.

Even if he had to risk everything he had!

Chapter 1213 Al'Katra [4]

Al'Katra was the homeworld of the Nox, and the Nox Emperors naturally wouldn't leave it alone.

Despite the fact that all four of them lived off-world, they split the world into four territories, each of which held a force that belonged to them.

Though, it wasn't as if these portions were equal.

Of them, the Soul Emperor and Inhuman Emperor had the largest claims. This had nothing to do with strength, but the fact that the two of them had the largest forces among their peers.

Next was the Karmic Emperor. His force wasn't as large as the rest, but it was still substantial. After all, he needed manpower in order to execute his schemes and enforce his will.

The emotional manipulation he partook in was mostly done through Supremes who carried a portion of his power and consciousness, essentially puppets for him to control.

The condition for them to give their bodies to him was for him to give them power, therefore, he needed land to provide them areas to rule.

The Saint Emperor, of the four, had the smallest force.

In all aspects, he was an individual. He moved alone and had plans too deep for anyone to understand. He only recently created a small force for himself and used it to groom Yong An, but the land area necessary for this wasn't much, so his territory was a sliver of what the rest had.

Those who subordinated themselves to him were more like religious fanatics than soldiers. They were followers, not troops.

The actual locations of the Nox Emperors were well-kept secrets. Some of them acted so quietly that it was difficult for anyone to pinpoint their locations, while some made sure those who knew where they were either subjugated or dead.

Currently, Damien was in the Inhuman Emperor's territory, which explained why the rules only prohibited slaughter superficially.

In fact, this territory encouraged the act under the pretense of harmony with structures like the battle arena. The Nox here would slowly breed their desire to kill to a greater extent than their base instinct called for, which was perfect for those in the Inhuman Emperor's camp.

Being in this territory was probably for the best.

These were the most simple-minded Nox, so Damien didn't have to worry about much.

But finding a path to the Demon Abyss was troubling.

There were no events or ceremonies surrounding it that he could use as an entry point, nor were regular Nox beings allowed near its vicinity in the slightest.

The only ones who could approach the Demon Abyss were Lords and Emperors, at least, as the six Supremes' memories implied.

Damien had a deep frown on his face as he tried to find an in.

'My strength is enough, but I have to remain quiet.'

Damien was untouchable right now.

Supremes couldn't do anything to him, and Demigods literally couldn't do anything to him.

Therefore, battle wasn't a problem.

But he couldn't alert the enemy to his presence. If he engaged in too much battle and found himself standing against the entire world, even he would reach a point of no return.

After all, it took him five years to kill just over a trillion Nox. Imagining how much time he would have to spend to kill his way off Al'Katra made him shiver.

And worst of all, there was still one thing that could kill him.

If one of the Emperors created a Supreme with enough of their power, it would definitely give him a run for his money.

If the four of them teamed up for that purpose...?

'Well, that's highly unlikely, but I should still be careful.'

Through the memories he obtained, Damien also learned of the ongoing conflict between the Soul and Saint Emperors.

The Soul Emperor's forces had been relentlessly suppressing the Saint Emperor's followers for 50 Abyss years. The reason behind their conflict was unknown, but everyone on Al'Katra was happily watching those two sides fight.

How would Damien react if he found out the cause was none other than himself?

He would surely laugh his ass off.

But that was a story for another time.

His thoughts in the moment were focused on two things.

Firstly, the obvious goal of infiltrating the Demon Abyss.

And secondly...

'Since two of them are already fighting, why don't I make it worse?'

He wanted to set the Karmic and Inhuman Emperors against each other.

His hope was that they'd split into four, but even if they split into two sides, it would benefit him far more than their current united front against outsiders.

'With the Inhuman Emperor's personality, it shouldn't be hard to incite him. The problem is finding a way to blame the Karmic Emperor.'

Damien had never seen the man before, so he couldn't just fabricate memories or use other similar hidden tactics to pin the blame.

But if he could find a way...

BOOOOOOOOOOM!

The ground rocked.

Damien's head swiveled back in the direction he came only to see a massive mushroom cloud rising into the air.

'That is...the city?'

It was far in the distance, but the fact that he felt the shockwave so clearly meant the explosion wasn't small at all.

'There shouldn't be anyone capable of creating a scene like that left.'

After he killed the Supremes, did someone else come to take over the city?

Or was there something more mysterious going on?

'Either way, since I'm planning to fuck the Inhuman Emperor over, it's my duty to go check it out.'

He just left, but that was only because he didn't expect something fun to happen so soon.

Damien instantly shifted his appearance again to avoid unnecessary trouble and made his way back.

And when he arrived...

Carnage.

The ordinary "citizens" were loose in the streets, killing and looting like no tomorrow. Their eyes were red as if they'd lost their sanity, and not a single individual was spared from the slaughterfest.

'I knew they were belligerent, but it shouldn't be to this extent.'

The loss of Supremes wasn't enough to cause something like this.

'No, maybe it is, but it hasn't been long enough for this kind of mayhem to occur.'

It wasn't even an hour ago that he assassinated them and left.

Even if others learned of their deaths in this time, the Executioners in the city would've stepped up and tried to maintain balance.

Not for peace, but for their own benefit. If they could take the posts of those dead Supremes and gain the acknowledgment of a Lord, their futures would be far more prosperous than now.

But...that didn't happen?

Executioners were fighting each other, High Commanders were teaming up against Executioners, hell, even regular 4th class Nox were challenging nine revolutions masters without care for their lives.

Indiscriminate and without reason, that was the best way to describe the ongoing scene.

'...but this still isn't enough to cause that explosion.'

Damien scanned the surroundings for the impact crater and found it soon enough. It seemed the battle arena had been obliterated first, and this chaos started afterward.

'The instigator is...'

Damien's eyes went to the sky.

There was a man standing there, a condescending expression on his face as he watched the Nox slaughter themselves.

But...

'...doesn't he...look a little different?'

Chapter 1214 Al'Katra [5]

Just a few minutes before Damien's arrival...

A man appeared in the skies above the city that had just recently lost its Supremes.

He wasn't a resident, just a passerby, but his mood was currently extremely negative.

'That punt ant. How dare he act so dismissive?! Does he not understand his position?'

He seemed to be aggravated by someone he'd just spoken to, and the humiliation he'd faced just moments prior clouded his mind.

'They are becoming uncontrollable. If this goes on, the Lord will have my head.'

He scowled as he thought about it.

Their mistakes would be blamed on him.

Why?

Because he was the envoy that facilitated the relationship between their two sides.

It wasn't as if he chose this position.

It was forced upon him, and he was forced to demean himself by creating this small Avatar with the power of a Supreme to cater to them.

He was a being far higher than them.

Even if he was nobody within his own influence, he was someone they should've only been looking up to.

'That soul ant understands. The rest...tch. They must be put in their place.'

Two of them didn't need to be touched as their loyalty was still strong, while the other one was too much of an outlier even for him.

'Therefore, inhuman brat, use your idiocy to entertain me.'

He found himself in the Inhuman Emperor's territory as he made his way back to the Demon Abyss, quite convenient in his opinion.

Since he was already here, why shouldn't he stir up some chaos?

He'd already caused mayhem in several cities he found along the way and weakened the Inhuman Emperor's forces, and just now, he'd come across a city that was already halfway destroyed.

After all, it had lost its Supremes.

'I should give that karmic brat a warning too. He has become more unruly in recent days.'

Since that was the case, the methods he used were obvious.

He incited the rage in the common citizens' hearts and eviscerated the flaws that were intentionally placed in their design.

Like this, he could make the Nox Jill themselves with a thought.

BOOOOOOOOOM!

He flicked his wrist and blew up the battle arena. His energy spread through the dust like a virus and rapidly encapsulated the whole city, forcing its citizens into a rampage.

'Haha, how amusing.'

All that was left for him to do was watch how these idiots died to their own desires. If nothing else, it made him forget the annoyances their leaders presented, and that was his entire goal.

It was quite entertaining to watch this slaughter, especially since the Nox were already creatures who loved partaking in it.

Their methods were diluted and backward, but the way they utilized them to try and make their way to power was novel from his perspective.

'However, this is boring after a bit. Shall I move on now?'

He'd been watching for a few minutes already.

Unfortunately, this city didn't have much to offer in the realm of talent.

'They are too difficult to control. I don't understand why the Lord is so insistent on keeping them, but I cannot question his will.'

The man sighed in reluctant acceptance of his position and turned his gaze away.

'Hmm...there are only a few more before I return to my post. Hopefully, they will show me something—'

"Hi."

A single word.

But it came from directly behind him, almost as if it was whispered in his ear.

He didn't sense the newcomer's presence at all.

The hairs on the back of his neck stood up like blades as he whipped his body around.

"Who dares?!"

A finger touched his forehead before he even saw his attacker.

"Naturally, I do."

His eyes widened.

"You...! You are...!"

"Shhh. Dead men don't speak, right?"

A stream of "energy" flowed into his body and started disassembling it from the inside.

As the man decomposed into ashes that drifted into the wind, he looked at the appearance of the man who killed him.

Long white hair, a large body with a gait not matching the Nox, and pale white skin that was just slightly greyed in a way that seemed fake.

A final thought flowed through his mind.

'This...is not...mana...'

And he died just like that.

He barely understood what hit him, and barely had time to process what happened.

Of all things, he never expected to meet someone who could kill him, or even dared to!

However, this same carelessness was what allowed Damien to take him down effortlessly.

And now that it was done...

Damien absorbed his memories with a frown.

That man...

Damien was also interested in his appearance.

Because just like his Demon form, that man didn't look like a Nox.

He had the same white hair, the same red eyes, and the same pale skin. His body was only slightly smaller than Damien's current form, something he hadn't seen in a Nox.

It was undeniable that this man was connected to the unknown bloodline Damien gained after devouring enough Nox. The power he'd so aptly titled his "Demon Bloodline."

For that reason, he instantly killed and stole his memories instead of risking anything.

And that's why he chose to directly use the Void to kill instead of his usual approach.

'Now that you're gone, let's find out who you are.'

Damien found his way to a safe area again and delved into the memories.

The first thing he encountered was a wall.

These memories were different from the ones he usually saw.

They were separated into two parts.

A portion of them were accessible to him, while the vast majority were locked behind a massive ethereal wall of light.

Damien touched it curiously.

'Is this...a barrier of existence?'

It was the first time he'd seen something like this.

He wasn't being blocked by anything he could understand. It was precisely because he couldn't understand that he was blocked.

This barrier prevented him from gaining knowledge above his caliber.

Knowledge that people of his state of existence were disallowed from knowing.

'What could it be...?'

He had some ideas, but they seemed too unrealistic.

The only way to know for certain was to browse what he was allowed to see.

And instantly, the unrealistic ideas in his head became tangible.

The newly deceased man's name was Aktruy, a strange combination of letters that didn't make much sense. However, his name was rarely used, if ever.

Judging by his thoughts, he was called by titles throughout his entire life in his homeland, and when he was among the Nox, he was called respectfully by his position.

"Envoy," Damien muttered to himself.

This man was a respected Envoy who connected Nox with another force.

And as he skimmed through more and more memories, Damien's heart raced.

'It isn't some regular force. He's not some regular person. This "envoy" nonsense is far more serious than I thought.'

His actions had consequences he wasn't expecting.

And the Envoy's identity created a plethora of problems and questions Damien didn't expect when he killed him.

'At most I thought he was an Apostle of some sort that served one of the Emperors, but...'

Damien's eyes hardened.

'...I never expected him to be from the Heavenly World.'

Chapter 1215 Al'Katra [6]

An Envoy from the Heavenly World.

Because 90% of his memories were locked behind the wall of existence, Damien couldn't understand anything about this identity.

He thought it was impossible for existences from the Heavenly World to descend, and he had countless questions about the race this man belonged to, but the only leads he had were the Envoy's thoughts alone, which barely gave anything away.

Damien could only assume the rules of the Abyss were different, or maybe there was some hidden method that required immense sacrifice to activate.

He didn't know.

'All I can tell is that this guy served some kind of "Lord," and that his mission in the lower universe was to watch over the Nox and keep them in line. It's difficult...'

This man was likely linked to the biggest mystery behind the Nox, their artificial nature, but unfortunately, he didn't provide any clues to this connection.

Even though Damien devoured his body along with his memories, he didn't feel any significant upgrade in his demon bloodline, nor did his body receive any sort of traits or strengthening, which was extremely odd.

All in all, it was like all information other than the factors relating to Al'Katra was hidden from him.

Almost as if it was done intentionally.

'But this can't be one of those things where I'm being guided. This one is too much of a coincidence.'

Their meeting was probably fated since Damien came to the Inhuman Emperor's territory directly without knowing anything, but that fate was natural and not altered by outside forces.

'It's stupid to even think about blaming Universal Flow since I'm not in the bounds it controls anymore.'

It was annoying.

Damien wanted to tear down the wall that disallowed him from getting the answers he deserved to have, but he couldn't do anything about it.

'I'll find out more when I ascend. It's not like that's far away at this point, so there's no need to get hung up on it.'

"Huu..."

Damien exhaled lightly and stabilized his mind.

At the end of the day, those secrets weren't too important right now.

He was now aware of the hidden enemy lurking in the Heavenly World, and that was all that mattered.

'Luckily, I'm using an altered appearance. When I get up there, I shouldn't be targeted by them, but...'

"Haa, things will get annoying if news of this spreads."

He was not excited to see how they would react.

If they had the ability to send their people to the lower universe without restrictions, he would have to prepare to confront several new and unknown enemies.

And more than that...

'If that guy was able to sense the Void properly before he died...'

Damien shook his head.

'Let's focus on this first. Once it's over, I can worry about the rest.'

Putting aside the negatives, there was an immense gain in killing him, a windfall that made Damien's life a million times easier.

'The basic knowledge should be enough to converse with, and his personality and body language have been fully ingrained in my mind, so...'

Damien wrapped his body in mana. By the time the swirling waves disappeared, his appearance had changed again.

'From now on, I'm the Envoy.'

"Aktruy" never called himself by name even in his thoughts. The titles he used were various, but the Nox didn't know any of them, so "Envoy" was enough of a name for this identity.

And with it, Damien gained easy access to the Demon Abyss.

Because, unknown to the normal Nox population, the Envoy was a being who stood on equal footing with the Nox Emperors.

He was also someone no Nox who knew of his existence would dare to probe or provoke.

Essentially, Damien found his golden goose.

'The Demon Abyss is far. If this was the universe, it would be easier to go into orbit and teleport there, but I'm afraid that'll have the opposite effect in the Abyss.'

Damien sighed again.

Since it had come to this, he would act as the Envoy and slowly make his way to the goal.

'Wow, this guy really made my life so much easier. I'll have to make a grave for him or something to show my thanks.'

The Envoy was already furious with the Inhuman Emperor and used his abilities to incite conflict between him and the Karmic Emperor, a similar plan to what Damien had in mind.

Now that he had this identity, he could sow discord openly without worrying about anything.

And with the Envoy's memories, Damien gained a deep understanding of the hidden Nox Emperors and their power sets, which gave him much more room to work with.

He was set.

Now, all that was left to do was act.

'It'll take a few years to get there regularly, but this guy...'

Damien smiled.

With this identity, he could make the journey in less than a year.

'Good.'

He was already getting excited.

He couldn't wait to see what the Demon Abyss showed him.

A pair of eyes shot open in the blackness.

Hissss!

A man sharply inhaled and clutched his chest.

"I am...alive."

He almost forgot.

After spending so many years with his entire consciousness in that body, he almost forgot his original identity.

'I was killed.'

A piece of his soul was in that Avatar. It wasn't as simple as waking up and being okay. He'd sustained a deep injury that he wouldn't be able to heal for decades.

"DAMMIT!"

He roared, slamming his fist to the side.

"That was not mana. The one who killed me..."

He didn't use the mana that the people of this reality used.

He used a form of "energy."

"Energy" very similar to what he was used to.

"I have to report to the Lord."

He stood up shakily, leaning on a nearby wall to catch his balance.

The injury of his soul didn't hurt yet, but the second his mind got accustomed to this body, he would feel excruciating pain.

Before that, he needed to transmit the message.

That man...that appearance, that attitude, that energy...

A medallion-like object appeared in his hand.

In the same movement, he inputted "energy" into its systems, creating a connection to a similar device long enough.

"Hahahaha!"

A bout of laughter came from the other side.

"I never thought I would see the day when a lowly slave tried to contact the Lord personally!"

"Yuba..."

"What did you just call me?"

"Sir...Yuba..."

The man gritted his teeth, his grip on his chest tightening.

"Now is not the time for this."

"Hmm..."

The voice on the other side stopped mocking him.

After all, this particular slave had been tasked with a job in the lower universe. His return to his main body indicated a problem already.

"Report. Why have you returned?"

As the other side turned formal, the man's eyes narrowed, rage bubbling in his chest.

"I was killed..."

"Killed? By a lower being? This is why—"

"NO!"

The man roared, falling to his knees.

"It was one of our own," he squeezed out.

He only had a single breath left.

He had to make sure they knew.

They had to understand that—

"—THERE IS A TRAITOR AMONG US!"

The man who killed him was a member of their race, not a lower existence, and not an external enemy of any kind.

"..."

The other side was silent for a moment.

It was obvious that a rain of questions would descend on him soon.

But the "Envoy" had no time left to answer them.

In a cave, shackled to a wall by his wrists, ankles, and neck...

"Aktruy," the "Envoy," screamed in agony.

This pain...

He would remember it.

Whoever that man was, whether it was another slave or the Lord himself...

"I...WILL...KILL YOU!"

...he would make them feel his pain.

Chapter 1216 Demon Abyss [1]

'Wow...this place is a lot more...futuristic?... than I imagined.'

Damien was currently standing at one of the entrances of the massive facility that housed the Demon Abyss.

He'd spent the past year and a half traveling through Al'Katra, and quite frankly, he was getting tired of the scenery.

After all, the planet was bleak.

The darkness where light could only be perceived through a medium of mana, the air of tragic existence that it carried, he naturally got tired of it as he spent more time here.

Other than the massive fields of Lesser Nox, he only came across five cities during his travels. Using his power to mimic the Karmic Emperor and destroy these cities was perhaps the only source of entertainment he had.

He could even sympathize with the Envoy a bit.

Nevertheless, now that he was at his destination, anticipation filled his veins.

The facility was built with an extreme geometric design of mostly angular shapes and a few spherical posts in the skies above, and overall, it looked bland.

The style was quite advanced from the Nox. It gave a vibe that let people know the purpose of the area. It wasn't for fun, and it wasn't for appeal. It existed for the sole purpose of protecting the most sacred grounds of the Nox Race.

'I've been here for a week or so, and looking at the people entering and exiting, it doesn't seem like the procedures to get in will be hard to pass.'

It was a basic iris scan and fingerprint, along with an identity check based on questions the individual themselves created, so that imposters could be blocked.

But he never saw the Envoy partake in such procedures in his memories, so he could only assume he was an exception.

'Still, I had to check to be sure. As long as they don't question me on anything about the Heavenly World, I'll be able to pass all of these tests without a problem.'

After all, Damien's disguise was perfect. He had completely mimicked the Envoy's appearance down to the finest details and even possessed all of the necessary memories.

'Haa, hesitating at a time like this...it's not like it's unwarranted, but it's so unlike me.'

Perhaps it was because his intuition was ringing bells.

He could feel it in his soul that what he found in the Demon Abyss would completely shatter his perception of the world.

'But that'll happen regardless. At some point, I have to leave the comfort of the lower universe and seek higher peaks.'

Damien understood them.

Those Demigods who decided to stay here instead of ascending, he couldn't critique them as harshly anymore,

The comfort of being at the peak, the comfort of knowing that everything was under one's control and within one's perception; it was addicting.

Even Damien, a man with endless ambition and the qualifications to achieve the impossible, was tempted by them.

But that was the extent of it.

It was just one of many temptations that begged him to become content.

He liked to entertain them, because it felt like he could gain a better understanding of his psyche by doing so, but he would never fold under their pressure.

What reason did he have to do so?

He understood reality.

Even in this moment, if he let his hesitation control him, he'd be putting the entire universe in danger.

Only strength could guarantee true peace, so he would never stop moving forward until he achieved that level where nothing could cause him fear.

He got rid of his concealment and descended to the ground.

The Envoy was an arrogant person. He wasn't someone who'd be lowkey in anything he did.

So Damien confidently walked through the facility's entrance and glanced at the Nox guarding it indifferently.

"Open the door."

The guards didn't even make a sound of protest. Rather, they stopped themselves before they could act prematurely.

Because once they saw the man who spoke, there was nothing they could do except bow their heads and allow his passage!

Damien walked through the first door without problems and encountered the second security layer.

This was where most tests would be held, but of course, he was exempted from them all.

The third gate was an interrogation area where one would be quizzed on the security questions they designed as well as questions prepared by the staff themselves, a double layer of protection.

Damien got out of this with a single glare and finally made it into the facility's main body.

The halls were pristinely white, strange for the Nox, especially considering that there were no white materials on Al'Katra, and there were connecting hallways everywhere.

The materials were definitely stolen from the universe, a fact that put a sour taste in his mouth.

'If it wasn't for the Envoy's memories, I would've gotten lost immediately. Once again, I have to give him some thanks.'

Damien went through a series of twists and turns through an unnecessarily complicated path towards the Demon Abyss.

'It's surprising. The rest of the world doesn't have any protection against outside forces, but even if one went directly to the Demon Abyss through the easiest routes, one wouldn't be able to get to it.'

There were three specified paths per entrance that would truly lead to the Demon Abyss, and each of them forced one to move away from it before moving back in its direction.

If one didn't know the right route, one would walk directly into a trap that would kill them without giving them a chance to retaliate.

'Rather than outsiders, I guess this is protection against other Nox.'

After all, the Demon Abyss was that kind of place.

Damien didn't know what would happen if the Nox came in contact with their force of origin, but it had to be a serious matter if it required this much defense to prevent.

Nevertheless, Damien continued forward for several minutes and passed several Nox beings dressed as scientists, researchers, and guards, all of whom stopped in their tracks and bowed respectfully until he passed.

Until finally, he could see the final door leading to the goal.

'This place...I need to input the code precisely if I want to get in. One slight mistake will expose me.'

Every individual who had access to the Demon Abyss had their own code to open the gate, and this code would change constantly.

Luckily, the changes happened every 5 years, as 5 Abyss years were nothing, and the code in Damien's mind was still valid.

'Phew...it's so easy it makes me more worried, but this is only regular considering my current identity. Calm down, focus, and go. That's all I need to tell myself.'

His heart was beating rapidly and his emotions were at an all-time high. This was it.

Behind the large mechanical door in front of him was the goal.

'Alright.'

He steeled his mind and calmed his heart. With steady hands, he moved to start inputting the code.

However, at that moment...

Pshhhhhh!

Steam rolled out over the floor as the 3-meter-thick door whirred to life and receded into the ceiling.

Damien turned his eyes to it in surprise as he watched a group of people walk out into his corridor.

His heart skipped, but he couldn't show it on his face.

'No way a coincidence like this exists...'

Out of all entrances to the Demon Abyss, 16 precisely...

Why did the Saint Emperor have to show up at this one?!

Chapter 1217 Demon Abyss [2]

The Saint Emperor spotted him at the same time he spotted the Saint Emperor, and upon realizing who he was, he smiled.

"My, my. 'Sir' Envoy, I didn't expect to see you here."

He started the conversation sarcastically.

Damien gritted his teeth.

This kind of disrespect was usual from the Saint Emperor. Of the Nox Emperors, he was the one the Envoy despised the most.

There were several reasons for this, but the main one was his strength.

According to his thoughts, the Saint Emperor was the only one who could threaten the Envoy. His power was at a level he couldn't see through, which made him infinitely wary.

And the fact that he had to be wary of a lesser existence from the lower universe ground his guts.

The two rarely had contact, but whenever they did, it proceeded just like this.

The Saint Emperor would subtly mock him, while he held his rage to maintain face.

"You, why are you here?" Damien responded passively, though, annoyance could be seen in his eyes.

The Envoy refused to call him Saint Emperor, but he couldn't call him an ant to his face nor did he know the man's true name, which had been lost in time.

So "you" could be considered an insulting form of address.

"Ah? I feel blessed by your concern for my actions, but this isn't something you need to know, right?"

The Saint Emperor's response didn't show any care for his disrespect.

Damien straightened his back and walked up to the man, standing just a foot away from him.

"Why would it not be? Did you forget who I am?"

He glared into the Saint Emperor's eyes, looking down at him due to their height difference.

"Haha, as expected of 'Sir' Envoy. There is nothing to worry about. My visit today is nothing more than a stroll in the park. The younger generation should see where they came from, no?"

Damien glanced at the group of four behind the Saint Emperor, made up of younger Nox geniuses who hadn't hit 1000 years old yet.

When he looked back at his enemy, his glare was much fiercer.

"Are you aware of the laws here? Even if you are an Emperor among these people, do you think you are enough to break the rules set by your masters?"

For the first time, the Saint Emperor's expression changed.

It was slight, barely perceptible, but his eyes turned cold, like a killer looking at his prey.

The slight bloodlust that leaked from his body wasn't something the true Envoy would've been able to sense, but the All-Seeing Eyes made it excessively clear.

'Does the Saint Emperor hold malice towards the Envoy, or...is it something bigger?'

Damien shook off his personal thoughts and focused on the conversation.

The real Envoy would try his best to find fault to punish the Saint Emperor here, and while it would delay him, he had to act out this role if he wanted to avoid problems.

"Why are you silent? Do you think I cannot do anything to you?"

Damien grinned cruelly and brought his hand up.

The Saint Emperor turned his eyes to it with a scowl.

Damien didn't have that power.

But the Envoy did.

He had an absolute authority over the Nox that could even subjugate Emperors, but he was only allowed to use it with cause.

'I wish I inherited that, but it must be a racial trait or something similar. I need to devour more of his kind if I want that.'

As Damien expected, the Saint Emperor's attitude changed.

"There is no need for worry. Naturally, I would never do anything to disrespect the Envoy, however, these juniors are quite special. They are the future of our race, so naturally, they will be beneficial to you as well."

Damien glanced back at the younger Nox.

"These ants? What can they amount to?"

"Haha, they are being trained by me, so is that even a question?"

"You are far too presumptuous for your position."

"That is not true. This is just confidence that stems from my loyalty to the cause."

"Loyalty? Do you truly possess it?"

At that moment, something unexpected happened.

"Hmm, that is the question, isn't it?"

The Saint Emperor gave a response totally unlike him.

Not just in Damien's knowledge of him, but the Envoy's as well.

He was never openly rebellious because, just like those weaker than him, just like Yong An, he had to hide his fangs and wait for an opportunity to strike.

'Has that time come?'

Damien's eyes narrowed.

"Boy, be careful with what you say. If I happen to report this to those above..."

Damien grinned again.

"I cannot wait to see what will happen to you."

The Saint Emperor raised his brow before smiling as if nothing happened.

"No worries. Naturally, I will not overestimate myself. 'Sir Envoy,' why don't you take this gift to appease your anger?"

The Saint Emperor placed his hand in Damien's and passed along a space ring whose contents were unknown.

"This is...?".

"You can consider it my tribute to you. I promise you will not be disappointed."

"Hmm..."

'I can't use mana because the Envoy didn't use mana, but I can't use the Void either...let's just keep up pretenses.'

Luckily, the Nox couldn't sense the "energy" used by the Envoy's race.

Damien raised his brow and glanced at the spatial ring as if he was observing its contents.

From what he knew, the bribes the Envoy usually received were translucent crystals of unknown origin and balls of light that reeked the stench of corrupted laws.

He could only assume this would be the same.

He put the spatial away and shook his head.

"This is not a tribute for me, but for the Lord. Do not forget who truly owns you."

The Saint Emperor nodded with a smile.

"Naturally, I will not."

Damien frowned. On the outside, it looked like he was displeased with the Saint Emperor's continued presence, but on the inside, it was an expression of his discomfort.

"Well, if there is nothing else, I shall take these juniors back to continue their training. I can promise quick results, so you do not need to worry about today's minor issue."

The Saint Emperor gave his parting words and walked away without any goodbye, whether it was a respectful bow or any sort of salute.

Damien gritted his teeth, suppressing his anger as he watched the man's figure fade into the distance.

And when he finally went out of sight...

"Phew..."

Damien let out a sigh of relief and inputted his code into the door, reopening the door that had long closed by now and entering the Demon Abyss' main area.

'Good. I'm still safe.'

He leaned against the wall and gathered his breath.

He was finally away from any sort of surveillance.

And while he'd managed to play off his encounter with the Saint Emperor and proceed without a hitch...

...his gut feeling was telling him otherwise.

There wasn't anything wrong with their conversation, at least, for the most part.

But that one sentence...

No, even disregarding that, Damien intuitively felt it.

The Saint Emperor knew.

He knew Damien's identity.

Somehow, he saw through the disguise.

But...he didn't say anything?

He didn't know what to think.

The Saint Emperor was far too mysterious, and just when he thought he'd unraveled a little piece of that man's psyche, he did something that made him far more confusing.

Damien frowned.

'Whatever the case, I'll have to find out later. For now...'

The Demon Abyss was right in front of him.

There was nothing more important than that.

Chapter 1218 Demon Abyss [3]

Damien was able to regain his calm after a few minutes, and without wasting a single second, he walked through the gradually enlarging tunnel until he reached its end.

The area was massive.

Damien was just a human. His perception range was extreme and his vision could pierce the heavens, but his natural form made him nothing more than an ant in this place.

Behind him were tall walls at least a few kilometers high which extended into the distance both ways for distance unknown.

Just like when he faced Al'Katra, he couldn't even see the curve in its structure, but it was obvious that these walls were the very facility he'd just exited.

The facility itself had the same diameter as several worlds combined, so this was natural, but the real majesty was the view in front.

The name "Demon Abyss" was apt.

The manmade structure to his rear was almost comforting, because in front of him was an expanse of blackness far more terrifying than the Abyss itself.

It felt like he was standing on the edge of the world.

If he fell into that space, his existence would dissipate into nothingness, and "Damien Void" would become a forgotten name.

'That's the darkness that they're bred in. Even someone like the Saint Emperor was born from this.'

As he approached it and stood on its edge, the emotions he'd just calmed came rushing back into his mind.

His mind, body, and soul were screaming at him not to go down there.

But for the first time in his life, he had to ignore his instincts.

This was his path.

This was a choice he made of his own free will.

The problems nobody else was willing to solve, he would solve them himself.

If it cost him everything, that was his own mistake.

It was his fault for making the decision in the first place.

But the presence of consequences wasn't enough to make him back down.

Short-term pain for the sake of long-term gain was the basis of growth.

And since when was there such a thing as reward without risk?

He stepped one foot over the edge, letting it hover over the Demon Abyss.

It felt strange.

The tip of his foot should've been submerged in the blackness, but it was still clearly visible, as if the Demon Abyss was just a massive sinkhole.

But this blackness was corporeal.

It was extremely real, and it was tangible enough to make him feel fear in the depths of his soul.

That darkness...

Why couldn't it cover his light?

'If this isn't a sign, then nothing is.'

"Huu..."

Entering the Demon Abyss was something even the Nox Emperors couldn't do, but the Envoy was different.

The power of his bloodline granted him entry.

And even though Damien didn't absorb his bloodline, he understood after carrying his identity for a while that they were one and the same.

His Demon Bloodline and the Envoy's, that is.

'The fact that I obtained a bloodline from the Heavenly World so easily makes me feel funny, but I guess I was already carrying the bloodline of two Gods since birth, and even the Void...'

Damien shook his head.

'Distracting thoughts, distracting thoughts.'

He smiled.

In the end, his distracting thoughts were still plenty useful.

Because by the time he realized his attention was too focused on something else...

He'd already tilted his body forward too far to turn back.

He was already falling into the Abyss.

'Ah, to think I'd get baited like this. And not by anyone else, but myself!'

Joking internally to overcome his fear, he fell.

He descended into the Demon Abyss.

The first thing he felt was the chill.

No, it wasn't necessarily a chill, but he did get goosebumps that made him shiver.

It was a complete absence of temperature.

His body instantly went numb as if his sensory organs decided to stop functioning, and with this change, it almost instantly became impossible to perceive distance.

After all, he didn't even feel like he was falling. If he believed his perception, he was floating on a cloud instead of barreling through the darkness.

At the same time, he could clearly feel it now.

The blackness didn't encroach upon his body. It was like his existence was the single source of light in this place, but he could now feel the murky aura of the blackness crawling over him like some sort of failed experiment come to life.

'Hmm...'

Damien's mind was surprisingly stable, contrary to his previous fears.

He'd been in similar situations too many times, and at this point, losing his perception during a fall was more comfortable than standing at the edge of the cliff.

Slowly and carefully, he started to toy with the surroundings to develop an understanding of it.

He first separated a strand of awareness and threw it into the distance.

'As expected, the link was lost instantly.'

Spreading his awareness here was impossible, but it was good to know that the natural forces of the Demon Abyss wouldn't corrode his mental power.

He did several more tests to see how mana functioned in this environment, whether or not the Void would react, how his Demon Bloodline would change when exposed to it, and even what would happen if he devoured the blackness.

All in all, he didn't discover much. The environment was devoid of anything, and while it didn't cause any harm, it also didn't do anything to benefit him.

'How strange. I expected there to be more downsides, but maybe this is the benefit of my Demon Bloodline. Since they're granted access, it would be weird for them to be suppressed.'

He just assumed the degree of suppression would be different since he was a human, but it seemed the Demon Abyss didn't discriminate against holders of the bloodline.

'Or, there's no such thing as someone able to carry the Demon Bloodline outside of their race.'

Damien shrugged to himself and continued searching the darkness.

'There are no signs of life. It feels wrong. There are supposed to be millions upon millions of Nox being bred here, but I don't feel the fluctuations of even one other existence besides me. The ambient aura smells of them, though, so they have to be here somewhere, right?'

Was it a special property of the Demon Abyss?

'It may be because of the Nox Race's nature. If this is their power of origin, then what if this entire Demon Abyss registers in one's perception as a Nox being?'

It would make sense why he couldn't sense the individuals if they weren't regarded as individuals until they left the Demon Abyss.

'Well...'

Damien sighed internally.

'I can't tell the time anymore because the concept of time is basically nonexistent in here. What to do...'

He'd basically conducted all the tests he wanted to, and his results were quite disappointing.

It wasn't really a problem since he was only investigating out of curiosity, but—

'—I now have nothing to do.'

Until he came across something interesting, he would just be falling for eternity.

'Haa...'

Damien smiled wryly. He never thought it would come in handy so soon, but...

'Welp, it's a good thing I did patience training.'

Chapter 1219 Death [1]

Damien spent an untold period falling through the Demon Abyss.

He stopped counting the hours before the first day even ended, and after that, he willingly closed off his perception so he wouldn't feel its absence.

This was the best way to fall.

Damien was confident in the strength of his body and regeneration, so even if he hit flat ground from an illogical height, he knew he would survive.

The only thing he regretted was the fact that he wouldn't be able to sense what was going on around him, feeling as if he would miss out on several secrets because of this choice.

However, he was wrong about that.

When he closed off his senses and embraced the numbing effect of the abyss, he found himself more connected to it than ever.

Perhaps that was the key from the start.

The light keeping his body from being consumed by its darkness was still present, but it wasn't visible to anyone but himself. The Demon Abyss consumed him wholly, invading his pores and orifices and coating his entire figure.

When that happened, Damien finally sensed presences aside from himself.

"They are...weak.

They were in their natal forms, so naturally, their life fluctuations were so weak he could barely feel them.

But in this connected state, he could now recognize their existence, and he could almost feel them directly.

'So...this is the early stage of Nox creation!

They didn't look like Nox. They weren't humanoid in the slightest, more like tadpoles drifting through murky waters.

The energy of the Demon Abyss continually pumped into them and energized them, feeding their creation.

'Judging by the intake speed, it should take around 5 minutes to create a Classless Lesser Nox!

Before they even left the Demon Abyss they would reach first class power, and Damien had no idea how many Nox could be produced in every batch, but just the speed of early creation was enough to shock him.

"To think life can appear so easily!

Was life so simple to control?

He had exceptional achievements in the Law of Samsara, but even he didn't think it was possible to boost the growth speed of a life form this much.

'And this isn't just boosting, they're actually creating Nox from nothing!

Rather, they were creating Nox from pure energy. This was a realm Damien hadn't even begun to touch yet.

'How interesting...I don't sense Creation Laws at all, but maybe that's because I haven't been in contact with them...?

I don't know, but everything about this feels unnatural.

It felt like the existence of the Demon Abyss was going against everything that was right.

It was the truest materialization of disorder he'd seen to date.

"There isn't much I can infer with my limited knowledge, but I can be certain that whatever they're using isn't present in the universe. Whatever the law that governs this interaction is, we have never come in contact with it.

Ever!

Not just Damien and his generation, not just the people he knew, but the entirety of known existence had never met this concept before.

'Perhaps that's why the Nox have been able to achieve so much. If their origin is a completely unknown force, their growth potential can guide them in directions we could never imagine!

When Damien was making his way here through the Abyss, a decent chunk of his journey consisted of him investigating the societies of ancient universes that were long forgotten.

Some survived and fought until their last breath, some disappeared before anyone even realized what was happening, while some others were hit by the Nox unprepared and were wiped out far faster than they should've been.

Damien was always curious about it. This curiosity was how that strange old man attracted his attention in the first place.

Slowly, he came to realize that the Nox Race every generation faced was different from their predecessors.

Every time a universe was destroyed, the Nox would go through a qualitative change. They became smarter and more tactical, their power became more refined, and their numbers ballooned to unreal proportions.

The universes he found that were destroyed easily despite resistance from the denizens were the most ancient of the group. These universes existed when even the universe itself was still vague in its power structure. The Nox of the time were still weak and didn't have the capabilities to develop intelligence, but their numbers and lack of fear or pain made them an impossible enemy.

Back then, the universal forces were too weak.

And the main reason for this...

...they didn't have the system backing them!

The system, the Apeiron Records as he'd learned to call it, was a supreme entity that guided all people, including the Nox.

However, it didn't always exist.

There was a time in the distant past when people could only live and die as mortals and "mana" never graced their worlds.

Back then, the Nox couldn't find their way to the universe, because the Nox didn't exist at all.

Damien only found fragments of these civilizations in quantities that could be counted on his fingers, but from what he could tell, the universe was relatively peaceful back then.

However, mana was a natural force. Once the universe solidified its laws, mana became prevalent in nature as it was always meant to be.

The first civilizations who encountered it had to learn how to use it on their own.

Their growth paths were rudimentary at best, and every thousand steps they took could only amount to half a step for the current population.

Because of this, their mana was impure and their power was restricted to the limits of their understanding. Their strongest practitioners were at most 2nd class beings, nothing more.

The Nox came into being around the same time.

They were regarded in many ways. As a disease eating away at existence, as Heaven's punishment for mankind, or even as saviors showing them the path they were meant to take.

These ancient Nox, born with the strength of 1st class beings, were able to grow through slaughter, and with their natural traits and their inherent advantages that the denizens couldn't overcome, they directly destroyed those civilizations without experiencing much loss.

The second phase started after these several universes were obliterated.

The Nox grew again, and the system appeared in the universe.

With a guide to streamline their growth, the universal denizens found themselves able to exert more power than ever before, and they learned the true heights of the heavens they once worshipped. However, they still couldn't do much.

The Nox gained their first signs of intelligence during this era, but unlike the current Nox Race, they were essentially puppets.

Damien could only make this conclusion now that he'd understood the true nature of the Nox Race.

Their second generation was completely devoted to the cause of their creators, and because of this devotion, they didn't need

intelligence to accomplish their goals.

This was the era when universes would disappear mysteriously. Even Damien couldn't explain it.

Because the concept of time, when perceived from his standpoint, was practically irrelevant. He couldn't tell the difference between 10 years and 1,000,000 years when he observed those fragmented pieces of history.

But the era started and ended eventually, and the next era began. By this point, a majority of the greater universe was gone.

There were at most a few hundred universes remaining, and these were the ones who were able to develop their laws and reach 4th class.

They were the ones who found the existence of the nine revolutions, and they were the first ones to sprout their own Demigods.

The Nox developed alongside them, reaching similar milestones and gaining the concept known as "free will."

The rest of the story didn't need to be told. Their beginnings and ends were similar to what Grand Heavens Boundary was currently experiencing.

But at every step, the Nox experienced a change that mirrored the denizens of the universe.

'It's a long history, and it seems to have no point when you just say it out loud but...'

The Nox plundered World Cores and even Universal Cores.

'With their behaviors deviating from their original purpose and becoming closer to true existences...it becomes clear that those plundered cores had a profound impact on their evolution!

It was quite ironic. The Nox were the ones bringing chaos into the universe, but they were also the ones who benefited most from its harmonious state.

'But if those plundered cores are actually being used by their creators...'

Then the growth of the Nox Race was a direct representation of the increasing strength of their superiors.

Damien frowned.

"The enemies I'll face in the future..."

He needed to get much, much stronger if he wanted to face them properly.

Chapter 1220 Death [2]

Damien continued pondering on history for a long while.

The growth path of the Nox Race seemed convoluted at face value, but it was actually ordered beyond expectation.

It was almost as if they grew whenever the universe grew, like they were a shadow reflecting the darkness of society directly.

But their existence was too odd.

Damien could see that they were aiming for World and Universal Cores from the start, but if that was the only meaning of their existence, he wouldn't be meeting characters like the Saint Emperor and Yong An today.

'Are they really just tools? Or was their true purpose skewed by the Void into something completely different?'

His original inference didn't feel wrong. The fact that the plundered cores were affecting them wasn't wrong, because every time they completed their heists and retreated to evolve, their similarities to true existences heightened.

Yet, he couldn't be certain.

He found out that the Nox had been influenced by the Void long ago when he found Azera, but he couldn't quantify the level of impact it had.

"The Void is already the most mysterious and unpredictable entity in existence, so even if my thoughts feel like they're flowing in the right direction, I have no choice but to doubt them!

After all, since when was the Void a force that followed a natural path?

"There's something here. I'm sure of it. There's something deeper hidden in the truths I've already discovered. I just need to-"

"Hm?"

Damien opened his eyes and unblocked his perception.

He suddenly felt a change in the environment.

How was he to "feel" any external force with his sensory abilities locked away completely?

Well, this jarring oddity was the exact reason Damien reacted. He raised his arms to the side and slowly reoriented himself to stand up straight before looking around for the disruption that alerted him.

"There's something here..."

He couldn't see it, but it existed.

It existed, but it didn't exist.

'A spatial pocket?'

Damien frowned.

"There's still security measures in place here. I didn't expect them to be so thorough!

Damien withdrew his mana and focused power into his Demon Bloodline.

'Since this is the key, it should also function as my eyes!

If he wanted to find it...

Bzzt!

He felt a mild electrical current spread through his body and make his skin tingle uncomfortably.

The feeling didn't subside over time, but became more prominent as his body moved further into the Demon Abyss.

'I'm approaching the bottom.

And that thing he was looking for...

'It's hiding in a spatial pocket as expected, but it's more severe than that!

"Huu..."

Damien remembered the "energy" the Envoy used in his memories. Using the Void to transform his mana and his Demon Bloodline as a foundation, he created a rudimentary form of that "energy" to utilize.

"This should be the answer.

Voom!

He spread his aura and allowed the presence of the Envoy to flood this area of the Demon Abyss.

Before his eyes, red lightning sparked to life and arced around him before concentrating in a spot below his feet and expanding.

Shatter!

The Demon Abyss broke open in the space that lightning occupied, and as Damien's body descended past it...

He found himself transported to a different space.

'Hmm...'

He was still in the Demon Abyss. This wasn't something like an isolated dimension or hidden realm, however, he was also in an area completely separate from it.

'An alternate reality!

A mirrored reality that existed parallel to its true counterpart, a space that didn't exist by conventional definitions.

And in this space was an entity.

Was it an entity?

It resonated with his bloodline and showcased life fluctuations as if it were alive, but its form was lifeless.

It was a three-dimensional geometric construct roughly twice the size of an average human that constantly shifted between prismatic forms. Its main color was black, but it was etched with poison-like green runic patterns that spanned its entire surface.

"This...what is this?"

Damien frowned to himself as he moved towards it, finding himself capable of controlling his body again.

'It feels dangerous, but since I was granted entry into this place, it means my identity as one of their race has been verified.

For anyone else, touching this construct would likely erase them from existence and turn them into nourishment for the Nox, a manifestation of the exact fear that Damien to hesitate when he first stared into the Demon Abyss.

But for him...

"This is the answer to everything!"

He felt it intuitively.

The second he touched it...

His hand went forward and grazed its surface.

Before he could even experience the texture of the construct, his mind was transported into a realm above existence.

As if the entire history of the Nox, their purpose, the meaning behind their existence, and everything they represented was in his hands.

No, the entire Nox Race was in his hands.

The Nox, as expected, weren't a natural-born species. Rather they were created using a seed of a certain race's power.

From birth, they were forced into servitude and used for various purposes, the most prominent and long-lasting of which was precisely the theft of World Cores.

Yet, whenever they plundered a world core, its power wouldn't empower them but would instead be forcefully transferred to their creators.

Only a small portion of it would be transferred to them.

This transference was done through the Demon Abyss.

The structure Damien just contacted was a "foreign material." It didn't have a name of its own, but it was essentially a control center for their race they dictated everything about them as if they were drones controlled by a device.

When the power of a Universal Core was fed to this device, it used the new understanding of laws and society it gained to change the Nox in the way that best supported the continuation of their existence.

In a way, it could be considered their greatest supporter and greatest enemy.

The Nox were not subservient by nature.

Because they were created in the image of destruction, their natural instinct made them abhor their slave-like existence. Their insatiable greed made them desire freedom more than anything else, but the only way they knew how to gain it was by destroying universes to evolve.

As their creators had no plans of giving the Nox an opportunity to grow and develop into something that could threaten them, all Nox were without the ability to rationally think unless they reached 4th class.

Contrary to Damien's thoughts, this was an intentional mechanism used to keep them enslaved.

Although their creators wanted to impose further control, the nature of 4th class, where the universe completed its first Baptism of an individual's soul, disallowed them to.

This baptism slightly removed the restraints on the Nox, but only enough for them to gain their intelligence.

It also gave them a special ability. It gave the Nox the ability to inherit bloodline memories, which were mainly used to keep the Nox aware of their purpose and indoctrinate them, but for those whose free will developed properly, it made them painfully aware of their enslavement.

But regardless of the knowledge they had, as Yong An said, they were subject to a "curse," a restriction that disallowed them from revealing any information about their fate or betraying their creators.

When a Nox reached the Demigod realm and underwent Cosmic Rebirth, they were finally rid of the constraints placed on them.

But there were Nox demigods who continued their conquest even after being freed. Naturally, not everyone would have the same line of reasoning. Some would actually choose servitude to their creators while others simply hungered for more power, patterns reflected in the Soul and Inhuman Emperors.

The Nox actually had many more Demigods than the other races in the vast universe, but most of them ascended to the Heavenly World and betrayed the cause they were birthed for after gaining true freedom.

The few demigods who stayed were those in the other category. This was also the reason it took so many millennia for the Nox to regain their strength.

No matter how many nine revolutions masters or 5th class Demigods they produced, very few would actually choose to work actively towards their creators' goal.

As Damien learned more about them, the Nox became far less fearsome.

Instead, he felt pity towards them.

Aside from those like the Saint Emperor, who used uncountable lengths of time to become an existence separate from a "Nox" by definition, the rest were just...puppets.

They were beings deprived of true existence for the sake of those who created them.

But at the same time, the very basis of their birth made them entities that could only ever be a scourge. They would never have purpose or benefit to anyone but themselves, and they'd never rid themselves of their self-destructive natures that limited their potential.

"The ones who created them...there's no information about them here, but they really are stupid. The Nox have infinite potential precisely because they're artificial and evolve through unique stimulus, but they've been used in the stupidest ways due to irrational fear!

Damien sighed.

'I don't know how to feel anymore. They're definitely the enemy, but...I don't want to see them go out like this!

No, he felt like if he could take this foreign material under his control and change the development path of the Nox to something pure, he could create a race of homunculi that could become revered within the universe.

'Unfortunately, that's not possible!

The foreign material was intrinsically connected to the Demon Abyss and the unknown creator race. This wasn't something he could just take away because he wanted it. Even if he did so, it would lose its function once it left this alternate reality.

'And...'

Damien's eyes hardened.

...no matter how much pity I feel, the current Nox Race is the enemy. And enemies...'

He pressed his hand forward and completely laid his palm on the foreign material.

...must be exterminated!

He steeled his heart.

The foreign material had complete control over the Nox until they entered 4th class.

At his current level, with a single thought, Damien could do anything with the Lesser Nox population in Al'Katra.

And he'd already made up his mind.

Sacrifices needed to be made for the greater good.

Even he, with his ability to achieve the impossible, couldn't get everything he wanted.

That was just life.

So, he executed his will without hesitation or doubt clouding his heart and mind.

He injected "energy" into the foreign material and gave a command.

"Purge."