

Void 1231

Chapter 1231 Ancient Battlefield [2]

'DAMMIT!'

His current condition was anything but good.

He never expected an easy fight from the start, but after pushing him so far, he didn't expect the human Demigod to still have the energy to kill himself so spectacularly!

In his current state, he couldn't do anything.

It would take at least several years to heal his crippled body, let alone his soul.

It was terrible.

Especially considering their current location.

If he was able to devour his own kind, he could heal far faster, but in this place, there were rarely beings weaker than him, especially not those willing to give up their lives for his sake.

'Dammit!'

That battle wasn't supposed to end this way.

At the beginning, it was a group battle. There were six of them, and they attacked a group of three universe Demigods after believing in their numbers advantage.

But, of course, that was their mistake.

Among those three, one was extremely powerful. He was a man who, by himself, was able to take three from their group alone.

He and the human Demigod confronted each other during this collision, and he originally believed he could quickly kill the man and escape, but who would've thought their laws were so similar?

In the end, he was left in this state.

Perhaps the enemy was dead, but the humiliation he suffered far outweighed that fact.

'Dammit!'

Regardless, he had to get out of here.

After that attack, the mountainous area was reduced to a plain, and anyone who passed by would be able to see his corpse-like figure and easily slaughter him.

He called forth the little mana he had and placed it into the tips of his fingers.

He used his only remaining arm to drag himself across the flat plain as his awareness spread in search of a hiding place.

Crunch!

"ARGH!"

The timing was perfect.

A being appeared in his perception at the same time they arrived before him.

He looked up, using his single remaining eye to look at who'd found him in this unlucky position.

Whether it was enemy or ally, they would kill him.

He wasn't able to escape his—

"Lower...existence...?"

His eyes widened.

This man...wasn't he a Supreme?!

Hope appeared in the Nox Demigod's eye.

If it was a lower existence, even with his little power...?

He reached up and grabbed the man's ankle with a grin.

"Kekeke...thank you...for the meal!"

He pushed all the Divine Energy in his fingers into the lower existence's body.

Even if it was negligible, it was more than enough to crush this man to nothingness.

And using the power he received, he'd at least regain the ability to move properly!

Or at least, that was how it was intended to go.

"T-this..."

His expression turned uglier than it naturally was with his disfigured appearance.

Why wasn't anything happening?

He looked up into a pair of amethyst eyes that stared down at him coldly.

That man finally spoke.

"Thanks for that, but I'm good. You can have it back."

BOOM!

The Ananta Matrix revolved and expunged the Divine Energy just like before, but this time, it directly targeted the felled Demigod!

His own Divine Energy returned to his body seeking revenge. It tore his already broken systems apart even more, and made it almost impossible for him to think.

"Oh? You're still alive? Well, that's good. I wanted to do it myself anyway."

Damien knelt down and placed his hand on the Nox Demigod's head.

With that last burst of Divine Energy, the Demigod was definitely weak enough to die by his hand.

"Become my power. Please and thank you."

Void Mana invaded the Nox Demigod's systems and devoured everything that remained.

The energy of nothingness, enhanced by the "nonexistence" in Damien's memory, was impossible to resist.

The Nox Demigod's body slowly turned to ash, not ink. His memories and power rushed into Damien's body as he smiled:

"That was easier than I thought."

The Nox Demigod died easily, but with his last memory being such a humiliating defeat, would he have peace in the afterlife?

Definitely not.

He would rot as he was meant to.

Damien's eyes glimmered with realization.

'That shouldn't have been so easy regardless of his state. It should've taken much longer to break him down and devour him. But since it didn't...'

"I guess my power increased more than I thought."

If it was like this...

If it was the weakest possible version of them...

"...maybe I could do it on my own?"

Damien shook his head wryly.

He could think about that when the time came, but for now...

'This guy's memories are great for me. Let's see what the Ancient Battlefield is all about.'

Damien's position was truly unfortunate.

He appeared randomly on the Ancient Battlefield, completely away from the intended starting point of the Demigods who were meant to be here.

Well, it wasn't for no reason.

His existence here was already a problem.

The only assumption he could make was that he got caught in the teleportation by mistake.

The Saint Emperor's arm was through his chest when the man got teleported away. If direct contact was enough to affect the displacement, there would be many more lower existences here, but the key was that it wasn't just Damien's body, but his corpse.

If he was registered by the universe as a non-living thing, it wasn't hard to understand why he'd been caught up in the phenomenon.

But that was beside the point.

He was lucky enough to be completely separated from anything of value when he arrived here.

In reality, the Ancient Battlefield was structured something like a game arena.

This grayish-black rocky terrain encompassed the majority of its territory, as this material was best for absorbing the shocks of these Divine clashes, but it wasn't all there was.

In fact, there were three sites of note on the map.

The first two were the base camps of the two opposing sides.

These weren't set up by the fighters themselves, but by the realm.

They were bases of operation and also the "spawn points" where they would find themselves immediately upon arrival.

Naturally, from the Nox Demigod's memories, he could only see the Nox side's base. Nobody was stupid enough to charge the enemy's fortress, as both sides were aware of their power balance.

However, just looking at the base put him in awe. It was quite the magisterial structure.

But, it wasn't nearly comparable to the third.

The third structure in this realm was a massive bordered area in the very center of the realm.

It looked like a river, but was as wide as an ocean. There were several white platforms that floated on its surface like lily pads, giving it an overall air of importance.

'According to this guy's memories, that place can't be accessed until certain conditions are met, but this idiot didn't bother to figure out what the conditions were. How annoying...'

It was surely going to be important at some point, but Damien decided to put it aside until he could find the answer naturally.

'The Nox are relatively unworried at the moment. It's not like they don't have a reason, though...'

The Nox didn't just have their own troops, after all.

Those traitors who succumbed to temptation and accepted the Nox's power also spawned on their side, and it was the perfect time to use them as cannon fodder.

'On top of that, people like Immortal Blood Asura will mess things up from the inside.'

Damien shook his head.

'The overall situation isn't in our favor, but it's also not impossible to win. The Emperors haven't made a move yet, so for now, it should be okay for me to move around.'

Damien gained a comprehensive understanding of his environment through those memories, and the situation itself was something that would change so frequently that its current state didn't matter.

'For now, there are more important things to focus on.'

He needed to find a way to survive.

But just running and hiding would never give him security.

Even the universe's base camp couldn't offer him absolute safety until its hidden evils were eliminated.

So it was time for him to test out that theory.

'Strangely enough, I don't have any doubts.'

Damien grinned.

If his life was on the line anyway, then it was better to do everything he could to survive.

He was not willing to die a meaningless death!

Chapter 1232 Ancient Battlefield [3]

The Ancient Battlefield was truly massive.

It had to be.

From a Demigod standpoint, millions of kilometers were negligible. To truly have an expansive battlefield that could bring out the full power of all those participating, it had to be massive.

But, it wasn't too large.

The goal was to fight until only one side remained. To prevent a situation where the numbers become so uneven that it becomes almost impossible to meet an enemy, the space would shrink depending on the number of remaining fighters, until it finally encompassed only the river in the center.

But for now, as battle had only just begun, it hadn't shrunk at all.

Damien began to move immediately once he got used to the power increase in his body.

He had to keep himself constantly concealed in several layers of protection to hide from any and everyone he passed, but he found it surprisingly easy.

This mana-guzzling action didn't put any burden on him at all.

There were two reasons.

Even Damien didn't understand how much he'd changed after his soul evolved.

Since mana was housed in the soul and used by the body, the synergy between the two was always important for a practitioner to truly be complete.

With his current soul, not only did the amount of mana he could store balloon, but the exchange rate between mana and output became far more advantageous.

Essentially, his soul allowed him to create a hundred times the power with only a fraction of the required mana.

This was the more esoteric of the two reasons. The full potential of the evolved soul didn't end here, but Damien still had to experience several battles and introspections to fully delve into it.

The second was far simpler. After all, he'd just devoured a Demigod!

The circumstances didn't let him pat himself on the back for this achievement, nor did he care to after what he experienced on Al'Katra, but the effects such an act had on his body were significant.

Not only was his physical body strengthened to a new degree that allowed him to cope with mild amounts of Divine Energy even without the Ananta Matrix, but his mana had reached a new state, as if it had been washed and purified by the energy of Demigods.

'The only unfortunate thing is that I still can't use Divine Energy. That won't be possible regardless of what I become before ascending to Divinity, because it's something only attained during Cosmic Rebirth, but...'

To transmute his mana into a comparable force wasn't a pipe dream.

'I need to change.'

Damien refused to stay the same as he used to be.

There was nothing wrong with his previous self. If there was, he wouldn't have achieved everything he did.

But, if he wanted to see the heights of his ambition, it wasn't enough.

'I have to throw away my doubts. I have to abandon my fears. Maybe it's not possible right this instant, but by the time I leave the Ancient Battlefield...'

He had to be a completely different monster.

This change was not just in terms of power or league, and not in terms that anyone else in the universe could understand.

To put it simply, it was time for him to start embodying the Void.

'But that can be saved for later. Right now...'

Damien glanced around.

It wasn't like there were Demigods everywhere, but there really were Demigods everywhere.

This number far outstripped anything he knew and understood during his time in the universe.

'According to that Nox Demigod's memories, the numbers on both sides are about even. But...from what I've seen from the Nox, there's at least a few thousand on their side.'

Did the universe have so many Demigods?

'Now that I think about it, Su Ren's master was unknown to me, but not to the experts of the universe. He was living in seclusion and taking an uninvolved stance in worldly affairs. When I met the Fallen Star

Holy Master in the past, he also said their Demigod Ancestors were in seclusion and left the sect to him...'

As he continued to think about different powerful influences in the universe, he realized that only a few, such as Prismatic Sun Holy Land and Blood Asura Holy Land, were actually run by Demigods.

Most of them were controlled by Supremes with their Demigods acting as nothing more than backing.

'It turns out we had so many experts just relaxing in seclusion this whole time. If I count those who are unaffiliated like Su Ren's master, the number gets blown even further out of proportion.'

Damien sighed.

He was starting to realize why everyone looked at the Human Domain so scornfully.

In total, they didn't have more than a few tens of Demigods. Compared to the rest of the universe, weren't they truly pitiful?

'But that also goes to show just how many powerful people we lost during the last war.'

Damien shook his head and silenced his thoughts.

He was just using them to entertain himself, but the time for that had passed.

After all, he was currently searching for something.

He didn't know anything about the stages of Divinity, nor did the Demigods in the universe.

Perhaps something like a true representation of their power in levels was only available in the Heavenly World. The Demigods who'd cut off their paths to ascension could only grow without knowing their endpoint and get stronger until they couldn't grow any further.

Their only way to gauge their strength was to see the level of those around them.

Damien was the same.

As he flew past several tens of Demigods, he took the time to observe each and every one, and followed the estimate of his base instincts to make judgements.

He wasn't looking for anything specific.

He just wanted a sign.

A reading that looked favorable.

And he'd finally found it.

Just moments ago, as he was passing over a mountain, he noticed a Nox Demigod in meditation on its peak.

From the looks of it, he hadn't engaged in battle at all since coming to this plane, and instead focused on increasing his strength in secret.

'This is Nox territory after all. Unless the situation is dire, they won't target their own. He must've assumed he was safe.'

Damien grinned.

'What a stupid mistake to make on the battlefield.'

He was the first Demigod thus far.

The first one his instincts called weak.

Damien was hidden in a separated dimension several hundred meters in the sky above that Nox Demigod.

He raised his arm silently.

His concealment was perfect.

His position wouldn't be given away unless he wanted it to be.

'As long as I prepare carefully...'

He'd already been observing for several days.

This Demigod only moved once a day to secure the area before returning to his meditative state.

That time had already passed today.

He wouldn't be getting up any time soon.

Damien's mana entered reality without a single fluctuation.

It was far darker than usual. Its blackness was deeper than anything he could produce before, making it clear that the ratio between Void energy and mana in his veins was starting to change.

Elemental and Samsara.

These two laws had been tethered, and their energies could now interact despite not fully fusing.

Damien summoned a ball of mana on his palm and compressed it thinner and sharper until it formed a needle. He then injected this needle with the energies of the two laws.

It was both black and white and rainbow-colored at the same time. The sharp contrast between the two energies caused spiritual chaos that spread through the needle and almost shattered it, but Damien quickly used the Void to stabilize them, albeit for a short moment.

This was it.

The new power he'd gained, the new mana he'd gained, the new soul he'd gained, they all came together for one purpose.

With this...

'...I'll take your head!'

Damien descended in an instant and landed behind the Nox Demigod.

Before his fluctuations could leak in the slightest, he flicked the needle at high speeds, allowing it to directly pierce the enemy's neck.

He realized as he watched it fly.

He realized as he watched it expand and turn into something he never intended.

The power he just used...was far beyond his comprehension.

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

Chapter 1233 Ancient Battlefield [4]

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

The explosion directly incinerated half of the mountain before slowly tearing away the rest of its body.

The Nox Demigod whom it originally targeted vanished completely in its light. One could only imagine what he was going through in the very center of those rampaging laws.

In fact, his life fluctuations vanished within the first few seconds, indicating his death far before the force could even reach its peak.

Damien truly didn't understand what he'd achieved when he tethered Elemental and Samsara.

Because the process came so easily to him, he couldn't grasp how amazing his accomplishment was.

As mentioned before, the tethering of these two represented Damien gaining control over the "material" aspect of the concept of existence.

This sentence was both simple and extremely intuitive at the same time.

The concept of existence, it was far grander than anything else Damien even considered understanding in the past.

Universal Law, the fundamental laws, Divinity; "everything" that could be manifested in reality was under the umbrella of existence.

Elemental and Samsara were perhaps only a single part of the many factors involved in the gargantuan concept, but they held far more value than any others.

This was because they created the backbone of all things. Without these concepts, nothing would be able to exist to grow and define the rest of those material concepts.

Therefore, when they were combined, Damien's power became something immeasurable.

As long as it existed in the physical plane, Damien could exert influence over it.

The only thing holding him back from sovereignty was his own power and league.

And going by his current standing...

Well, maybe they were the weakest of their kind, but even some Demigods couldn't withstand his force with their bodies.

Of course, the problem was that if they had a single opportunity, they could also kill him in a flash.

This was why Damien made thorough preparations and stayed as concealed as possible when he attacked this time.

And as he watched the explosion, he gradually rationalized his new state of existence.

'If what I'm thinking is true...'

Then even though he killed that Demigod just now, he hadn't truly killed him.

Damien frowned.

He looked at the explosive cloud that was still growing by the second and pushed his hand out.

'Devour.'

He didn't know what he was aiming for, but if "anything" still existed in that cloud, he would devour it.

Energy flowed into his body.

It came from the mana in the atmosphere and the earth that made up the Ancient Battlefield, but nothing more.

At least, not at first.

In just a few seconds, Damien noticed a change.

A strange energy he couldn't perceive properly flowed into his body through Devour, and in his mind, agonizing screams resounded and bounced around.

He felt something inside him growing.

He wasn't directly conscious of it, but after his experience in nonexistence, he could at least somewhat understand its existence.

His "soul" was growing.

'As I thought, I can't completely eliminate them with just force.'

Demigods were entities above the logic he knew.

Not only did their vessels have a new level of power, they had direct access to their souls and the ability to consciously affect their growth.

This meant they could remain living without a true physical body.

Their souls held far more of their identity than their vessels.

It wasn't a definite thing, of course.

The soul would remain an esoteric concept unless one spent an extensive amount of time studying it. Just because they could perceive it didn't mean every Demigod had the ability to control it properly.

But, there were definitely Demigods who could survive as soul bodies for a period of time.

There were several problems with such a state as well, and it wasn't as easy as possessing a body to revive, but that was a conversation for another time.

After all, Damien wasn't aware of any of this yet!

All he knew was that his power was great.

Great enough for him to survive in the Ancient Battlefield.

'If I keep killing like this, if I keep growing stronger through combat of this level...'

The barrier that separated him from Divinity would become flimsy extremely quickly.

'First of all, let's get out of here.'

Damien confirmed the death of his target when he succeeded in devouring his soul, so there was no reason for him to stay here.

'The enemy will congregate here soon to find out what happened. In the worst-case scenario, I'll get ambushed again.'

Frankly, Damien wasn't completely okay.

His experience in death gave him real trauma.

It wasn't like when he was still growing, where his mentality would be completely ruined by it, but he had become quite paranoid and untrusting of his own strength.

Because of this, he immediately fled.

He traveled several dozens of millions of kilometers until he was so far away from the explosion that he couldn't see or sense it in the background, and then he continued moving.

'I have a goal. Instead of focusing on other things, I should move towards it as fast as possible.'

He calmed the excitement brewing in his heart. He kept a cool mind and rationally viewed the situation, disallowing himself from falling prey to overwhelming emotion.

He had two things to do now.

First and foremost, he needed to kill until he wasn't endangered by any and everything.

And second, he had to find allies.

'Aside from Albeus, I haven't seen anyone else from our side. I can't even tell if I'm moving deeper into enemy territory since it's impossible to differentiate when the terrain is so uniform.'

The only thing he could do was keep moving forward. He would meet them eventually as long as he did so.

And with that thought in mind, he moved.

Days turned into weeks, and weeks turned into months. Before he knew it, Damien had been in the Ancient Battlefield for over a year.

That wasn't any time at all in the grand scheme of things.

This battle would go on for decades at the very least.

The battlefield hadn't shrunk even once yet, which meant there were a considerable number of Demigods still alive on both sides.

However, for Damien personally...

'Heh...'

He grinned to himself as he gripped his fist.

He just killed another one.

This was his tenth assassination in the past year.

The number wasn't very big, but when the subject was Divinities, even ten amounted to an uncountable number of lower existences that might have even exceeded Damien's current kill count.

He was slowly getting used to the atmosphere here.

He was slowly getting rid of his paranoia, and as his power grew, the need to be secretive also lessened to an extent.

'Just a few more and I can start targeting stronger enemies.'

Damien was satisfied with his progress.

But...

He still hadn't met an ally.

It wasn't that he saw nobody from Grand Heavens Boundary, but he hadn't met a single person he could actually reveal his existence to.

At least, that's how it was for the past year.

As he teleported around to find his next target, he noticed a flash of color on the horizon.

A rainbow mana that he'd only seen from one person before.

A bright smile formed on his face.

'Finally...'

Finally, he saw traces of someone he could trust.

Chapter 1234 Ancient Battlefield [5]

Damien rapidly made his way to the location.

Demigod battles were never stationary. Since their steps could move them from star to star effortlessly, it was natural for them to move around a lot when they were battling with their full power.

When Damien reached the flash he saw, there was nothing remaining but calming fluctuations of the once rampant mana, but the fact that it wasn't yet dispersed completely meant they hadn't moved far.

He spread his awareness and focused on his perception.

'It's not always big explosions or fantastical scenes. When they need to concentrate their power, Divinities strike more silently than anyone.'

His eyes were useless for something like this. He used his ears to feel the earth and listen for vibrations, he used his awareness to scout millions of kilometers in the distance, and he used his intuition to judge where all the factors would combine.

He already sensed several pulses from the distance, but if he just followed them, he'd never catch up.

What he needed to do was predict their movements.

His mind traveled at light speed as he did several calculations. His eyes shot open as he plotted the route.

'There.'

His body vanished.

He flashed through the surroundings until he was at least five stars away from his original position before concealing himself and lying in wait.

And within the minute, the ground began to tremor, the force causing this change coming closer and closer by the second.

BOOOOOOOM!

It wasn't an explosion.

A body tore through a nearby mountain and slammed into the ground only a few hundred kilometers away from Damien.

He watched as the Nox Demigod rapidly stood up and stabilized themselves before glaring into the distance.

'Ah, unexpectedly, the enemy is also someone I know. This one should be the Blade Lord.'

If he wasn't mistaken, the Sword Lord was one of the Inhuman Emperor's followers, roughly on the same level as the Marionette Emperor.

He was supposedly quite the gallant figure.

Because he followed the path of the sword, his demeanor didn't match the rest of the Nox Race, instead representing something like a master who severed his connection with all things but his sword.

It was honestly respectable in a sense, if one ignored his true nature.

But currently, he didn't look like his reputation in the slightest.

He was battered and beaten, and after being thrown through the mountain, he seemed to have taken extreme internal damage, as black blood was constantly leaking from his mouth.

As he stood strong and raised his sword, a figure appeared in the air.

Beautiful, like a star lighting up the dreary atmosphere of the Ancient Battlefield, Eyrisea Luminus raised her arm like a graceful willow drifting in the wind.

"This is the end," she said coldly, looking down at the enemy.

"The end? Haha, that is not something for you to decide."

The Sword Lord responded confidently, but his body betrayed his thoughts.

He could hardly move anymore. It was certain he wouldn't survive another attack from her.

Yet, he trusted his sword and raised it once more.

Though she looked pristine, he was sure her internal condition wasn't great either after battling for so long. He was clearer than anyone about the type of damage he could do.

So as long as he succeeded in this attack, he'd have a chance.

As long as his sword followed—

"You seem to be unaware of your situation."

A voice appeared in his ear.

He shuddered.

Iris hadn't moved from her place in the sky, yet...

He looked down with a wry smile.

Right, when he was facing her, the entire world became his enemy.

The second he allowed himself to hit the ground, he lost.

The earth around him clamped around his legs and refused to let him move. There were already spikes on his back, just moments away from impaling him.

"It was a good battle," he said weakly.

Clang!

His sword dropped to the ground.

He no longer had the strength to hold it.

But he wasn't worthy of an honorable defeat.

"Perhaps to you, but to me, you are just another fodder. Please don't think of yourself too highly."

SHIK!

Along with Iris' words, the spikes impaled his chest and stomach, and rampaging mana destroyed the remains of his internal body.

He melted into ink with an expression of unwillingness on his face, and another wave of rainbow mana appeared to make sure he would never revive.

Death in both body and soul.

The most terrifying outcome for a Divinity.

Iris landed on the ground before the corpse and flicked her wrist, picking the treasures he held out of his remains.

'Good. As long as we continue like this...'

Her eyes suddenly shot to the side as a presence appeared in the void.

She already raised her hand to attack, but in the split second her mana took to gather...

"Wait, wait! Look before you shoot!"

A familiar voice graced her ears.

Her eyes widened.

"You...!"

Damien landed next to her with a smile.

"What, weren't expecting to see me here?"

Iris' eyes widened even further. They were practically popping out of her skull.

"Why are you here?!"

The presence of this man was completely incomprehensible, but she couldn't deny it.

After all, she felt something strange from him that had never and could never be replicated. It was undeniable that this man was truly Damien Void and not some illusion created by the enemy.

"Why can't I be here?" Damien asked back.

"Do I need to answer that?! Why and how are you– wait, we don't have time for this!"

Iris quickly grabbed his arm and shot into the sky.

A barrier of protection enveloped them as she used her full speed to shoot away from the area, flying for almost half an hour in complete silence before landing in a nondescript mountainous area like the one Damien spawned in.

Damien tried to make conversation, but she didn't respond to his words as she dragged him to the ground and into a nearby cave.

It was her personal hideout, the place she was using as a base while she attacked the Nox forces.

After finally reaching this place and activating the numerous defense mechanisms that hid and protected it from the outside world, she finally turned around to face him.

"Huu..."

She took a deep breath and closed her eyes before reopening again.

This was her final confirmation, just her entertaining the needless thought that he was a fake.

But seeing him standing there looking at her in confusion, she was forced to accept it.

"Alright, before anything else, explain!"

Damien raised his brow curiously.

This was an interesting appearance from her.

After all, he'd only encountered the playful Iris he knew. Seeing her act like a Demigod on the battlefield was quite novel.

But he also understood why she was so forceful.

His appearance in the Ancient Battlefield was far more confusing for the Demigods than it was to him.

Damien smiled wryly.

"So basically...I died."

He started his story off as such.

He told the tales of his journey to Al'Katra, exploring the Demon Abyss, dying, and being reborn here. He told her how he'd been moving for the past year and protecting himself while growing and hiding, all the way until he reached the moment when they met.

Iris' expression went through a myriad of changes. From shock at his decisions to extreme shock at the fact that he'd died...actually, it seemed her expression just became more and more shocked as he kept talking.

It was insane.

It was a story that wouldn't have been believable in any other circumstance.

But Damien was here, and his story also helped her understand why they'd been transported to the Ancient Battlefield in the first place.

And because of Damien's unique identity...

"Haa..."

She sighed in resignation.

There was only one thought in her mind.

"You...are truly insane."

Chapter 1235 Ancient Battlefield [6]

Regardless of the rationality behind it, it was true that Damien was here and nothing would change that.

Leaving the Ancient Battlefield before the war between Demigods ended was not permitted. Many had tried to flee in the past, but things like circumstances and emotions didn't affect the rules of this place.

"Really, what am I supposed to do with you?"

Iris felt like she'd sighed more in the past few minutes than she had in her entire life.

"What do you mean? I'd prefer if we worked together, but if you don't want to, I'm also fine going on my own," Damien responded casually.

"On your own?! Do you understand what that means?!"

"Why wouldn't I? I've been doing it for the past year, you know."

"That's...true, but still! If you met someone truly strong, could you guarantee your life?"

"Hahaha! Since the moment I found myself here, my life hasn't been guaranteed."

Damien laughed heartily.

The sentence had more meaning to him than Iris realized.

After all, while he told her about his death because there was no way to explain his existence here otherwise, he didn't say too much about it.

Iris was probably assuming he was exaggerating and didn't truly die. He likely reached the cusp of death and managed to survive through the same secret means he'd been hiding from her since their first meeting.

If she ever realized he truly came back from the dead, she'd be swamped with a whole different wave of confusion.

Damien's life wasn't guaranteed.

It was something he'd come to terms with in the past year.

In the lower universe, he never thought about it. No matter how close he got to death, he was always of the mind that he "would not die."

It was a stupid arrogance that he regretted, because when death truly came, it didn't give him any possible means for survival.

Now, in this place surrounded by enemies who could kill him with a flick of the wrist, he came to realize just how meager his life was in the grand scheme of things.

It was a motivator above all else.

Iris stared at him strangely.

"What is your plan if you move alone?" She asked, her tone becoming milder.

Damien shrugged.

"Kill and get stronger until I don't have to worry anymore."

"Agh! Can't you say something that puts my worries at ease?!"

"You're worried about me? I can't lie, I'm a little touched."

"Now isn't the time to be joking!"

Damien smiled.

Though her domineering attitude was fun to watch, he liked this Iris, the version he could converse with as an equal, better.

"Calling it a joke is a bit harsh. You have to realize my circumstances. It's either I fight until I survive, or I die. There's no escape for me."

Iris shook her head, unable to respond.

It wasn't just for him, but for everyone on the Ancient Battlefield. The problem was that his chances of survival were so much more meager than anyone else's that she couldn't understand why he was so calm!

"Haa, you understand that moving with me will put you in more danger than moving alone, right?" She said.

"Of course I do. But, the more danger there is, the greater the opportunity to grow. I have to get stronger as fast as possible, so wouldn't it be better for me to ally with you?"

Iris frowned.

"Don't worry. If you're thinking I'd be a burden, that's simply not true anymore," Damien continued before she could speak.

"...what?"

He wouldn't be a burden?

Here?

That had to be a joke!

Rationally speaking, there was no reason for her to accept Damien's offer to ally. To someone as strong as her, he couldn't be anything but a burden.

But, she also couldn't bring herself to accept leaving him to his own devices.

Putting aside the fact that him acting as he pleased got him into this situation in the first place, she had a personal relationship with him.

She wasn't so heartless as to abandon a friend...no, the only true friend she'd ever had.

She refused to do something so disgusting.

And putting aside even her personal feelings, if one looked at Damien objectively, it was hard to deny his potential.

While it would definitely be burdensome, protecting such a genius until he reached maturity would give her many more returns than abandoning him.

Right now, the struggle in her mind was between rationale and emotion, and Damien understood it well.

He wasn't so arrogant as to say he could hold his own.

But to say he was a burden...?

Maybe that was a bit extreme.

"Here, let's do this," he finally said.

"Pour your mana into my body."

Iris looked at him like he was a madman.

"What?!"

Damien smiled and grabbed her arm, placing her hand on his chest.

"Don't worry about it and just go. If I was going to die, would I even ask you to do it at all?"

Iris furrowed her brows in hesitation, but she couldn't deny his reasoning. After traveling with him through the Severed World, she was clear on his personality.

"Fine, but if you get hurt, I'm not helping you."

"Haha, I never expected it, but I know you would."

"Tch."

Iris rolled her eyes and pushed Divine Energy through her palm, allowing it to flow into Damien's body.

She controlled the flow well, but it didn't take much Divine Energy to kill a lower existence.

No matter how much she controlled it, if she didn't stop after a single second, he would inevitably die.

Or at least, that's what she thought.

"H-huh?"

She stammered as she suddenly felt the mana escaping her control.

Like there was a black hole in Damien's body, her Divine Energy was pulled beyond her will and sucked into his body.

"Stop right now! You'll really die!"

Damien grinned.

"It's nice to see you all flustered, but I'll have to disappoint you."

He put his hand on the cave wall to his side and let the Ananta Matrix do its job.

As long as there was Divine Energy in his body, it had to be expunged.

As long as it could be expunged, he wouldn't suffer damage.

This was the skill he'd developed in the past year.

BOOOOOOOOOOOM!

A terrifying force tore through the cave and put a massive hole in the wall. If Damien didn't specifically aim so the blast would dig downward, it would've punctured the side of the mountain they were in.

He turned back to Iris, happily enjoying her dumbstruck expression.

"What do you think?" He asked.

"I'll be able to survive quite well, won't I?"

There was nothing she could say.

An ability like this...did Demigods even have an ability like this?!

If they could directly expunge the enemy's Divine Energy in the same form through which it entered, they'd be able to avoid leagues of damage that broke them down over long periods of fighting.

If the Blade Lord could do this, he wouldn't have died to Iris' strikes!

"I know you still have the issue of combat power to worry about, but I can demonstrate that when we get out of here."

Damien continued as if what he'd done was nothing.

But honesty, Iris didn't need to see his combat power. Just this ability alone was extremely useful, especially if he could use it on others.

Combat power was just a bonus on top of the already delicious cake he'd just presented her!

She sighed for the last time.

"Alright, I concede. Let's go together."

It wasn't a hasty decision, nor was it a logical one, but it was the decision she wanted to make, so she didn't care about the nuances.

But if she was going to ally herself with Damien, she needed more assurance than just this.

"Let's start from the top," she said.

"I'm sure you're still unaware of too many things. First things first, let me tell you about the overall situation of the Ancient Battlefield."

Chapter 1236 Ancient Battlefield [7]

Essentially, what Iris did was fill in the blanks for Damien.

He had sufficient information about the Ancient Battlefield itself, but he was lacking in knowledge about the situation between the two forces.

In short, it went something like this:

The number of Nox Demigods versus universal Demigods started off at roughly 10,000 on each side.

When traitors were counted, it changed into a battle of 13,000 against 7,000 or so.

The two bases were stationed at the extreme poles of the battlefield, and thus it was almost impossible to come across the enemy base unless one was intentionally making their way there.

On the universal side, at least a thousand Demigods needed to stay stationed at the base to guard it, and many of those thousand took back-line roles to support those who were battling on the field.

It was still a war.

Intelligence gathering and other such tasks still held incredible importance, as the locations of those elusive enemy Demigods and the Nox Emperors couldn't remain unknown if they wanted to win.

Because the universe already had a numbers difference and the strength difference was also somewhat skewed against them, they needed to move with some coordination if they wanted to stand a proper chance.

Though, not everyone was part of this.

The Demigods who worked as part of this systematic army were the majority, but some, like Iris herself, decided to move on their own instead, only staying in contact to receive information from the intelligence side.

There were many reasons for this, but the main one was distrust.

Iris and several of her allies already had a force of their own, and instead of submitting themselves to those in the base camp or creating problems with infighting because they refused to bow down, they decided to form their own camp that would act separately yet still in tandem with the main base.

In this group were those like Iris, Alucard, Commander Huo, and a majority of the Demigods Damien had friendly relations with.

It was a bit surprising seeing how they were all so connected, but at the same time, it made sense.

After all, Damien had a type.

He didn't like to associate himself with those who only sought benefits despite the seriousness of the situation.

Nevertheless, the situation of the universal side was a bit torn, but for the most part, much more stable than it was in the lower universe.

As for the Nox...

Well, they were much more individualistic, and not just by nature.

It seemed the Nox Emperors stopped exerting extreme control over their Lords when they came to the Ancient Battlefield.

According to the reports Iris received, the Emperors had completely abandoned the main war and were having some sort of battle amongst themselves.

The Saint and Soul Emperors became more separated than ever, and surprisingly, the Saint Emperor's behavior had shifted in the past year.

His subtlety and mysteriousness had disappeared to an extent, and his mood seemed to change far too often, like he was snapping.

Funnily enough, it was completely Damien's fault.

The Saint Emperor risked everything to kill him and get the so-called Dark God's Seed that was in his body, but obviously, he'd failed.

The three "seeds" the Nox were obsessed with were not seeds at all, but more similar to body constitutions.

The Empyrean God Seed that Yong An possessed was what gave him control over the Abyss, the Yin-Yang Heaven Seed was within Zara and Alea, and only manifested when they combined after the Beast Emperor Star War, and Damien's Dark God Seed...

Well, it was the Nox's mistake from the beginning.

It didn't even exist.

It was just the Void that they didn't even realize they were worshiping.

It was quite funny when one thought about it.

Especially when that person was Damien, he felt great pleasure thinking of the Saint Emperor's expression when he realized he did all that for nothing.

Aside from the situation with Zara and Alea that he had no way of knowing, Damien was able to understand the rest after listening to Iris' explanations.

He found a clue towards the final mystery remaining about the Nox, the influence of the Void in their evolution.

Nevertheless, that was a minor fact at this point. Damien could focus on it once he was able to live safely in the Ancient Battlefield.

It wasn't just those two Nox Emperors acting strangely.

Through the deceased Envoy and Damien's actions, a rift appeared between the Karmic and Inhuman Emperors, who were already on bad terms due to the differences in their natures.

However, since they were forced into the Ancient Battlefield, none of them were able to address their internal conflicts.

If they did, they would give the enemy an opening to pierce through.

The Ancient Battlefield wasn't a kind place. Only one side could leave this place. Regardless of how the Nox felt about each other, if they wanted to survive and take revenge on those they despised, they needed to work together to fight the universe first.

So, the situation became like this.

Most Nox Lords were acting on their own, while the ones who formed groups did so of their own volition.

The Nox Emperors were currently just overseeing the situation since neither side was able to take the lead thus far, but it was certain they'd start acting soon.

To see how the universe's side either came together or broke apart, time was needed, but overall, both sides were holding onto a flimsy balance until they found the chance to turn on each other.

"So for now, the only goal is to kill as much as possible before that happens."

Iris ended her explanation and looked at Damien, who was deep in thought, waiting for his response.

She wanted to see his tactical ability, because, with his current power, he needed to move like a snake, relying on trickery and schemes to get by.

This would be a great help to her, who wasn't a great planner.

And more than anything else...

'The God Slayer operation basically fell apart because of the suddenness of our transportation, but if I can raise him into a proper Demigod during this time...we might be able to bring it back to life.'

The original Operation God Slayer was simple in essence.

It was a plan to slowly cull the Nox Demigod population through a variety of means, including a few biological weapons that had been secretly developed by their forces.

However, now that those hidden weapons were left in the lower universe and inaccessible, they needed a new plan to keep the momentum on their side.

The current balance was too fragile to rely on.

And though Damien didn't know anything about Operation God Slayer, he also understood the fragility of the situation.

It would boil over the second one side gained an advantage.

'But...'

Damien smiled to himself.

'This is a lot simpler than it used to be.'

He was quite happy.

His thoughts were completely different from Iris'

In his opinion, they were overcomplicating things needlessly.

'Plans and schemes, they've gotten so used to using means like this without the ability to act on their own that they forgot who or where they are.'

This was the Ancient Battlefield.

Plans, schemes, trickery, perhaps Damien needed these elements to keep himself alive, but wasn't that just because he was weak?

The purpose of this plane was simple.

It wasn't war, but slaughter.

The only thing they needed to do was kill.

'So what we should do now...is kill until they realize that.'

Chapter 1237 Ancient Battlefield [8]

Damien was also a victim of this mentality.

As he got older, no matter how much he wanted to use power to force his way through everything, he found that intellect was necessary to do what he wanted.

His enemies were too powerful and much, much smarter than him.

Damien was never a genius in the literal sense. He started out at the bottom of the intelligence spectrum. Putting it lightly, the teenage him was a supreme idiot.

So when he grew and started using his brain, he still didn't do it as well as others, which is what eventually led to his death.

He was lucky enough to have the strength to compensate for his dullness. If it wasn't for that strength, he probably would've died several times.

But, he still tried his best.

He still tried to strategize and put himself in a position where he could control events behind the scenes.

Only, this time, that was the wrong approach.

He was tired of it.

All the schemes and trickery disgusted him, because these people had the power to face each other directly but refused.

In a sense, it was cowardice.

The only way to end this conflict was to kill, and in the Ancient Battlefield, there were no tools to use besides one's own strength.

Therefore...

"What's the point...?" He muttered out loud.

"I'm sorry?" Iris responded in confusion.

"What's the point of all this? In the current situation, why do we need to do so much?"

Iris smiled wryly. She didn't need him to say more to understand. After all, she'd had the same questions.

"There isn't one," she responded succinctly.

"Maybe it's hard for you to understand, but most people can't accept the easiest solution, because when it's that easy, it feels wrong."

"Though, that's not it. If you were them, would you go out of your way and risk your life?"

"Yes, I would. Even if I were them, that wouldn't change anything."

Damien's response was surprisingly fast.

"It's common sense, isn't it? Either they risk their lives to protect their futures, or they betray us and risk their lives to protect their futures. No matter what the outcome is, they won't be able to reach it without facing death. Doesn't that make the current situation meaningless?"

Iris was silent for a moment.

It wasn't like Damien said something wildly profound, nor did he display knowledge above his status.

He said something that should've been common sense.

But common sense wasn't that problem.

"Hahaha...hahahahaha!"

She couldn't help but laugh.

He really didn't say anything.

She felt stupid.

But why was this so refreshing?

"Then, what do you think we should do?" She asked in sheer curiosity.

"Do I even need to say that? We need to force those bitches out of their hidey holes," Damien responded with a grin.

"Hahahahaha!"

Iris' laughter got freer.

"Right, that is indeed the solution."

There wasn't anything wrong with the current situation. Even if it would take a long time, it would eventually balance itself out and the people muddling the simplicity of it all would come to their senses.

But it was clear Damien didn't want to do that.

"Alright," Iris finally said, calming herself down.

Her tone was a lot lighter now. Her stress evaporated like it never existed in the first place.

"When the situation is simple, just take it simply, huh?"

She liked it.

She liked it a lot.

She'd had similar thoughts, but every time she did, she fell into a hole of bad choices.

Either she and her people succumbed to the situation and followed the lead of those Demigods in the base camp or stood against their allies and tried to reform the universe's forces with their own hands.

Those were the options she saw, because when one was so deeply involved in events, it was hard to see the third route.

It was hard to realize that the option to break the board and ruin their games even existed.

And even if it did exist, how did one go about accomplishing it?

Didn't it take a great deal of planning and perfect execution?

But no.

Not at all.

Maybe in any other circumstance it would be that complicated, but as Damien said, it wasn't like that this time.

If they moved against their own people they'd be labeled traitors and become the common enemy of the people they were trying to control, so the cowards in their turtle shells couldn't move in the dark.

There were no consequences to acting on one's own accord.

If they were, would Damien have even met Iris here?

"Let's do it then," she said, feeling like she'd been struck by enlightenment.

There were no consequences, so why hesitate?

Damien smiled.

"Okay, let's do it."

He didn't really understand why Iris was acting like he said something genius, but he didn't care.

It seemed her doubts about traveling with him disappeared, and if she accepted his decision, he didn't have anything to be unhappy about.

Iris didn't waste any time.

She felt like she'd been reborn with a mentality that was free and unrestrained.

She immediately contacted the intelligence division and found the coordinates of every Nox Lord they were tracking, and then contacted her allies to fill them in on the new course of action.

Obviously, some people responded like she was crazy. This wasn't an Eyrrisea Luminus thought process at all, but it made them feel just as refreshed as she did.

Because they also remembered who they were.

They were Demigods.

They were Divinities.

They weren't snakes or foxes, they were people who didn't need to stay bound by conventional ideologies.

What was the point of having power if they limited themselves to the games set up by others?

A subtle change appeared in the universe's forces at that moment, a change in mindset that would slowly become more physical with time.

But for now, it was still subtle, and had nothing to do with Damien and Iris.

The duo began plotting their route soon enough.

With Iris' power and Damien's support, they only needed to stay wary of a small portion of the enemy's forces, a number no more than a few hundred.

So, they started to move soon enough.

Iris was naturally the main attacker. She approached enemies alone and started battles like she'd been doing until now.

But Damien's presence was far more impactful than she ever expected it to be.

He couldn't kill them, but he could give the Nox Lords fatal damage that made the battles easier for her, he could help her expel Divine Energy or use himself as a shield to absorb and redirect hostile mana, and he could act as an all-round support using his laws to control the battlefield and give her the advantage.

Slowly but surely, the fame of this duo would rise to new heights and they would become the start of a revolution in the Ancient Battlefield.

But...

That was a story for the future.

At this point in time, they were still in the process of perfecting their synergy, and as they moved, they conversed about many things.

Through this, more than just the overall situation, Damien learned some specifics about the war.

And some of this information...was extremely shocking.

Chapter 1238 Ancient Battlefield [9]

It was about death, but the conversation didn't start that way.

One day, while they were resting in their hideout and deciding who to target next, Damien suddenly had a thought.

"Ah, what happened to Orion? I forgot about it earlier, but I was thinking it was surprising you guys weren't together."

"Ancestor...?" Iris responded wryly.

"You're right, we were traveling together, but he had some things to take care of, so he left just a few days before I met you."

"Things...to take care of?"

Iris' eyes were tinged with sorrow.

She told Damien all about the living, but she purposefully avoided talking about the dead. She didn't want to see him bogged down by their sacrifices.

But it couldn't and shouldn't be avoided. They were just as important as the living, because their heroism was what created the relatively stable situation they were currently in.

As they spoke, Damien's expression didn't change much.

Most of those who died were killed in battle, and he respected them for it, but since he didn't know him, their deaths didn't hold much weight in his heart.

They just made him realize his responsibility.

However, among the various names that he'd only heard in passing was one he was familiar with.

The Drunken Old Immortal.

A man whom he didn't know well but owed a favor to, a man who helped him plenty in the unnamed world despite their lack of connection.

His position in Damien's heart was similar to Albeus.

But from what Iris said, he died proudly.

Just like Albeus, he decided to end his own life, taking four Nox Lords with him.

Damien couldn't even mourn him, because the feeling in his heart was also pride.

That casual man who drunk to the point where it became his power, he wouldn't have wanted anyone putting themselves down because of his passing.

Once again, Damien felt the weight of the burden on his shoulders, to carry the torch he inherited from his seniors.

"...and, the in the last big incident that made the Ancestor move personally..." Iris continued.

"...the Third and Fourth Primal Sovereigns fell, and the Ancient Sovereign appeared in the Ancient Battlefield."

Damien's eyes widened as he tuned back into her words.

"The Primal Sovereigns are also included in this?!" He exclaimed.

"Yes, but also no," Iris responded.

"The Primal Sovereigns stand equal to the universe, so they aren't subjected to its restrictions the same way everyone else is, but their ability is quite unique."

"Perhaps among all entities in our lower universe, they're the only ones who can come and go from this plane as they wish."

Damien nodded in understanding.

As she said, because the Primal Sovereigns were born with the universe and not from it, he felt it was unnatural for them to be transported to the Ancient Battlefield with the rest of the Divinities.

But, it made sense if it was intentional.

After all, the Primal Sovereigns were essentially manifestations of Spatial Law.

It wasn't surprising for them to be able to go anywhere they pleased at any time without restrictions.

At least, that was the case for the first five Primal Sovereigns, since the rest weren't Divine.

"Ancestor, as well as the Third and Fourth Primal Sovereigns, are our allies, so they chose to aid us here. However, those two were ambushed by a group of powerful Lords and the Karmic Emperor, and they lost the battle in the end."

Iris sighed.

"According to Ancestor, the Ancient Sovereign appeared in that place and slaughtered the Nox Lords who killed them, but the Karmic Sovereign clearly escaped. He left to meet the Ancient Sovereign and find out the nuances of the situation."

Damien nodded again. Orion's decision made sense, and the Ancient Sovereign's presence was also natural.

After all, there were only two of them left. The Fifth, Fourth, and Third had all died at this point, so if he didn't show his face, Damien would've had to question whether he truly existed or not.

"Where are they now?"

"We don't know," Iris answered, shaking her head.

"I can feel the Ancestor's existence, so they're still in the Ancient Battlefield, but nobody has been able to track them. I don't even know if Ancestor met the Ancient Sovereign or not."

"Hmm..."

Damien furrowed his brows.

He and Iris had been doing good so far.

Along with the rest of their allies who followed their actions and started a full-frontal attack on the Nox forces, they'd successfully started the revolution they had in mind.

The war was becoming fiercer by the day, and the number of Lords they encountered and battled on a daily basis increased from just two or three to a whopping ten or even twenty.

If they kept moving like this, Damien was confident in tethering Spacetime to his Elemental-Samsara connection within the year.

However...

"I want to meet him."

He also wanted to see the Ancient Sovereign, the entity who stood equivalent to Spatial Law in a literal sense.

He was the first. His knowledge was vast, and his power was vaster.

Damien's power had changed into something completely different now, but he was originally a spatial practitioner, and he still held the law in his heart.

So he wanted to meet the one who understood it more than anyone else.

Plus, his intuition was blaring.

Deep in his soul, he felt a voice telling him that meeting the Ancient Sovereign would bring him unexpected benefits.

"It's not a selfish wish," Iris said with a shrug.

"I also want to meet him, likely for different reasons than you, but we can't. I can't even track Ancestor through our bloodline connection, so finding him is even more impossible."

"And if we could...?"

"Then, don't even think about abandoning me. I won't let you do something like that without me."

"Haha, watch your words. If you keep talking like that, I might fall for you."

"Hmph, you wish. You have to get in line if you want a chance with me."

"Oh? But, I don't think the line is so long, though?"

"I-it's very long. What're you implying?"

"Haha, I'm not implying anything. It's just...the most beautiful woman in our universe isn't very friendly, is she? I doubt anyone actually has a chance."

"That's..."

He hit her where it hurt!

Eyrrisea Luminus, the woman hailed as the greatest beauty in the entire universe, had no friends or close relationships that weren't business-related!

"Anyway, we can't find the Ancient Sovereign, so let's just focus on what's in front of us!"

"What a graceful way to change the subject."

Damien smiled.

Iris was definitely an interesting character.

They'd been together for a few months now, and he'd seen both sides of her personality.

It was like there were two versions of her.

No, there were.

Damien still saw the beautiful goddess with the eccentric appearance and the simple brown-haired woman who overlapped whenever he looked at her.

It felt like the goddess version of her appeared whenever she was in serious situations, and the simple side only ever showed itself when they were in this cave hideout.

He still didn't know why he saw her like this, but he didn't feel like this situation was similar to other cases he'd seen like Lily and Mei.

It was more like...she didn't accept that both sides were herself.

It made him want to see what would happen if these two sides combined into one. He was certain she would only find her true potential once she was able to do that.

But, again, that was beside the point.

'She says it's impossible, but I don't believe it. This ability hurts like crazy, but...for something like this, it's worth it.'

Damien put his hand on the rocky ground and spread his awareness into it.

"What are you doing?" Iris asked.

"I'm doing the impossible," Damien responded with a grin.

Iris harrumphed in annoyance at his corny words, but ignored him. She got used to his cheesiness in these months.

Damien returned his focus to the task, refusing to acknowledge the embarrassment in his heart.

He'd never done this before, but he realized it was possible almost a year ago.

'Absolute Perception.'

He was a man who controlled material existence. His body was the only thing holding him back from using this power in its true form.

So as long as he was willing to endure some pain, he could do it.

His mind became one with the earth.

His body became the earth itself.

Anything the earth could see, he could too.

He saw both the Nox and Grand Heavens Boundaries base camps, he saw Alucard and the rest, he saw the enemies he'd face in the future, and...he saw the Saint Emperor.

"Khh..."

He couldn't focus on that man right now. His hatred would only be detrimental.

Instead, he focused on the Second Primal Sovereign, Orion Luminus, who'd subordinated himself to him.

Since they already had a connection, he'd be much easier to find.

The earth responded to Damien's call and his vision blurred as his perception traveled hundreds of millions, almost a billion kilometers in an instant.

And suddenly, he saw Orion.

He was standing with another man whose visage was blurred strangely.

'Found him.'

Damien instantly recognized his identity.

That was the one he was looking for.

The only man who could hide himself from a perceptive ability of this level.

"Keuk...!"

Damien coughed strangely, forcing the blood pooling in his mouth down his throat. Without waiting a second, he memorized their coordinates in relation to his current position.

And as he went to deactivate the ability and heal himself, a voice entered his ear.

"There is no need to worry. I shall wait for your arrival."

Damien's eyes widened.

His mind returned to his body.

And once again, he experienced excruciating pain.

Chapter 1239 Plague Lord [1]

It didn't need a wordy explanation.

Damien suffered for several moments from the pain of his internal organs rupturing one after the other, to the point where it caused Iris to panic and nurse him to health, a process that was supported heavily by his regenerative abilities.

Convincing her that he truly found the Ancient Sovereign wasn't that difficult.

The random damage he'd just taken was proof he used an ability beyond his league, and since Damien was always showing her impossible things like they were nothing, she easily accepted that he did something nobody else was able to do.

Iris was a direct descendant of the Second Primal Sovereign, which made the Ancient Sovereign her uncle. It was natural for her to want to meet him out of curiosity, but, well, to put it simply, she had her own questions to ask him.

Therefore, the two set out without wasting much time.

The distance separating them from their destination was roughly 800,000,000 kilometers. Considering they needed to take breaks to rest and would be delayed by enemies, the journey was bound to be a long one.

Nevertheless, they'd only set out recently.

It had only been a month since they disassembled and abandoned their cave hideout, and though they'd had conflict in the past month and faced several tens of Demigods, they'd only now come across a truly strong opponent.

The Plague Lord.

He had actually appeared once before in the universe. Back in the battle for Eden, he was "fended off" by Priscilla Adelaire and a force of experts.

However, that was evidently not his true body, but an Avatar that was mistaken for his true body. Otherwise, wouldn't the restriction have been triggered far earlier?

The man Damien sensed on the horizon was his main body.

He'd heard of that Lord's terrifying abilities from the stories about that battle, and considering that he was now in his complete form, his control over disease was likely much higher, to the point where it could affect Divinities.

Damien frowned and immediately went into hiding, a move that alerted Iris to the presence of a nearby enemy.

Unlike their usual battles, though, Damien identified the opponent clearly and spoke to her through mental transmission.

"The Plague Lord is approaching. How's your resistance?"

"Not great, but not bad. We just have to kill him before he can kill us. If that happens, you can cure me, right?"

"Haa, your attitude has changed so much. I don't know how to feel about it, so I'm just going to say I must be that reliable. Anyway, yeah, I can bring you back as long as it isn't fatal."

"Then that's all. How much do you know about him?"

"Just a bit."

"Then I'll fill you in."

Damien and Iris exchanged a myriad of words in the span of a single second.

Battle strategy wasn't necessary anymore, so it was just in the realm of information.

And by the time they were done, the enemy was already in front of them.

"New prey, strong prey..."

The Plague Lord spoke in broken sentences, and his gaze was dull. His body looked like sludge that had been rotted away by countless diseases, but the vitality emanating from him was great.

"Prey? It's a bit too early to be saying something like that," Iris responded aggressively.

"New prey, talkative."

"Right, I do not make conversation with irrelevant people either."

BOOM!

Iris didn't charge in, but instead made distance.

She flicked her arm forward and the worldly forces came together.

The earth rose to form a dense cage around him while the air trapped in the cave compressed and exploded. Divine Energy laced the interaction, and under Iris' control, it dug into the Plague Lord's body, dissecting him.

"Fun, good, fight."

Muttered words echoed through the atmosphere.

BANG!

The rock cage exploded into bits as the air pressure became too strong, and splashes of green sludge flew in all directions.

As the sludge landed on the ground, it separated into a variety of different disease carriers who died on the spot and spit fumes into the air.

Iris frowned.

'Not good.'

As his name suggested, the Plague Lord wasn't a direct combatant. He would torture his enemy to death by infecting them with countless viruses that would eat away at not only their life force but their soul!

His usual strategies had already been recorded. These seemingly harmless plague bearers would become the foundation of the death trap that would eventually encapsulate his enemies.

They couldn't be left alone!

However, despite her knowledge, Iris ignored them.

'The key to killing him is attrition. His body is not conventional, so conventional means will not work. I have to make sure he uses everything he can and exposes his true body. That will be the moment to strike!'

In fact, the sludge-like appearance the Plague Lord held was due to his power. His true body had never been seen, but it was rumored that he was nothing more than a frail old man underneath all those protective layers.

So her job was to strip them away!

Iris kept her eyes on the Plague Lord to make sure he couldn't get closer and exerted her will over the environment.

In the air behind her, metals constantly materialized and formed weapon constructs that she shot at him without mercy.

The ground turned into a living entity, something like a Kraken whose every tentacle weighed ten thousand pounds.

For now, these were her two main methods of attack.

Though, the Plague Lord wasn't idle either.

His speech patterns did not represent his cognitive ability. There was no way he wouldn't know that information on his habits had been spread through the enemy forces.

After all, information about them had spread among the Nox too.

"Prismatic Master, Universal Law, not good in Ancient Plane, no?"

"You do not need to concern yourself with my matters. It is more than enough to slaughter you!"

The Plague Lord grinned disgustingly and moved his arm.

From the gap of his shoulder, a swarm of locusts appeared and formed a thick shield before him.

Xiu! Xiu! Xiu!

Iris' material constructs swept through the air, piercing into the locust wall and destroying thousands of them with every impact.

The earthen tentacles attacked at the same time, attempting to make their way past his defenses and strike him directly.

The Plague Lord grinned. His lower body melted, turning into a true river of sludge that formed its own tentacles and countered the earth.

They didn't have nearly as much destructive power, but they were extremely corrosive.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The force the earth carried was reduced by half by the time it reached the Plague Lord, but that force was still substantial.

BANG!

The side of his torso blew open as he moved to dodge the traveling force, spraying toxins into the air.

BANG! BANG! BANG!

There were several thousand tentacles. He avoided most of them, but without powerful agility, he couldn't get past all of them.

A layer of protection left his body with each hit, and the atmosphere was slowly being dyed a disgusting green color.

Iris could've considered it a small victory, but it was not one.

After all, despite losing layers of protection, the Plague Lord's body didn't seem to have decreased in size by more than a few centimeters!

And on top of that, the corrosive force of his tentacles was truly terrifying.

Instead of Iris' earth whips being something that constantly barraged and cornered him, they became one-time-use items that burned away on first contact.

Iris frowned as she continued her current strategy, using the same tactic to buy herself time to think without revealing her strength.

'This won't be easy. This guy is troublesome.'

Their battle hadn't been going on for more than thirty seconds, but the amount of corruption in the atmosphere was already reaching severe levels.

Iris wouldn't be able to protect herself from being invaded by these plagues for much longer, and the second she was infected, it became a true battle of time.

'I might have to reveal more.'

It was too early to make assumptions, but she predicted the flow so she wouldn't be forced to act without preparation later in the battle.

'For now, I'll pressure him and strip away as much as possible before my protection wears off.'

Iris did exactly that.

She expanded her abilities and used more elements than just earth and metal, mobilizing the air and even water that spawned from nowhere to her advantage.

While she only used basic elements, her control was flawless, and the depths of her law comprehension allowed her to inflict serious damage with the most common abilities.

The Plague Lord's body was being peeled away layer by layer, but he didn't show signs of worry.

After all, this was how it always went.

They always thought they could kill him first.

But it was simply never true.

He smiled, the same disgusting smile that would make people die from sheer abhorrence.

Once again, he'd found a specimen that would promote him to greater heights.

Chapter 1240 Plague Lord [2]

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

BOOOOOOOOOOOM!

Countless explosions lit up the air. The clouds that formed from them were not made of dust, debris, or natural elements, but of pure infected air that would cause one to rot on contact.

But Damien wasn't paying too much attention to it.

Only enough to confirm Iris' state and progress in wearing down the Plague Lord.

His job was easier, but only because of who he was.

'Fighting him head-on is definitely a pain in the ass, but the scene down here...I can only say it's a real blessing that he wasn't too involved in the universe.'

This man's power affected the entirety of his surroundings whether he desired it or not.

If a scene like what he was seeing happened in Grand Heavens Boundary, countless innocent mortals would've been massacred.

'What a terrifying power.'

Iris couldn't see it because of her position. To her, the green fog was prominent, but it wasn't all-encompassing.

But the ground below was completely different.

When Damien landed, he quite literally could not see anything but fog.

He had to rely on his awareness to see since the All-Seeing Eyes couldn't help him with this.

'I have to be as quiet as possible, at least until I've cleared this up a bit. If he notices me at this point, I won't be able to react in time.'

It was insane.

It was like the entire world was filled with rotting abscesses. The ground was impossible to see under the piles of rot that manifested at a time unknown.

'It's crazy. To think just a few plague bearers could multiply into this in such a short span of time.'

Damien completely concealed his bodily fluctuations. Because of his new soul, as long as he could hide his body properly, he was free from all perception.

Therefore, when he stepped out of his secure dimension, the Plague Lord, who was already occupied by the battle above, didn't sense his existence.

'Good. Now...'

"Huuu...."

Damien took a deep breath. He could feel the tiny infected particles entering his system and instantly attempting to corrode him, but a power that had disappeared for a very long time returned at this time.

Swoosh!

Streams of pitch-black energy flowed through his internal body and devoured the infected particles, turning them into energy that was devoured by his soul.

'Nice.'

It had been a very long time since Damien encountered a mana-based poison.

The Void Physique's very first benefit was its ability to completely conquer hostile foreign energies.

And it seemed it was done testing him for now.

Since he'd unlocked a portion of its true form, it was obediently listening to him.

Damien's body entered a cycle of being infected and cured constantly, which not only built up his systems, but provided him a surplus of Divine Energy to repurpose.

As he affirmed his safety, he began to move.

For now, only Iris could properly fight the Plague Lord. He was too strong for Damien to interfere.

But the Plague Lord didn't have much real attack power.

The rotting abscesses Damien was standing on were the source of his power, a cumulative effect that couldn't be stopped unless they were destroyed.

'But if you try to destroy them, they'll explode and infect you further. It's a lose-lose scenario for anyone but me.'

Numbers, strength, none of it mattered as long as the Plague Lord had time.

'And that fucker is tricky. His escape ability is unprecedented.'

Damien paused for a second.

'Well, second to mine, of course.'

With a smile, he knelt down and touched one of the abscesses.

'He has a mana connection with them. He'll sense it when I start, so I have to finish quickly.'

'Devour.'

Damien spread his mana similarly to when he used Absolute Perception to create a net that encompassed the entire infected ground area.

Like flames on oil, Void Mana traveled through the net and pushed into the ground, consuming not just the abscesses, but the infected ground under them.

It was a strategy to cut the weeds and pull the roots!

'He should've noticed me by now...'

BOOOOOM!

'...yup.'

An explosion tore through the fog above Damien's head, but he didn't move.

As expected, a multicolored ethereal barrier formed, forcing the force to redirect into the air and explode away from anything relevant.

'As expected of her.'

Perhaps Iris looked like she was struggling, but Damien knew better.

That woman would not fall so easily.

'She's still hiding so much, after all.'

He smiled and focused on his task.

'Time for phase 2.'

Devour worked fast, but with this much rot to plow through, it would take a few minutes to finish.

While that was ongoing, Damien raised his other arm into the air and gave commands.

'Separate. Entrap. Banish.'

Space bent to his will.

The Void formed walls that pushed different plague strands away from each other to defuse their cumulative effects.

Space acted in tandem, trapping the infectious mana in separate dimensions before Time showed its face, combining with Space to banish the mana from existence completely.

'Phew. What a tiring process.'

Unfortunately, because mana was of the ethereal plane, Damien's control over material existence couldn't be exerted here, but this was good enough.

That power could be saved for a better moment.

'Luckily, it's just mana. After getting used to Divine Energy over time, it isn't the same inviolable force that it once was.'

He just needed to do his job.

It felt easy, but he was a sitting duck. The second Iris made a mistake, his life would be over.

But Iris...

She wasn't so careless.

Unbeknownst to Damien, the battle had already moved a few million kilometers away from him.

Though it was still within the infected area, as Iris didn't want its radius to get bigger than it already was, they were far enough for both Damien and Iris to have sufficient time to react if the Plague Lord decided to aim for him.

That is, if he had the chance to target Damien in the first place.

BOOOOOOOM!

It wasn't an explosion, but a footstep.

As Iris drove the Plague Lord into a corner, she dug her mana into a nearby mountain and did several complex procedures in secret.

The Plague Lord was able to gain an advantage in that time.

Because her attention was split, the protection around her body failed, and his rot started to corrupt her.

'I have ten minutes. Once Damien finishes, that time will be doubled.'

It was more than enough.

For a battle of Demigods, ten minutes was an eternity.

So as she endured the damage she received and used her remaining attention to keep the enemy occupied, she completed her hidden maneuver.

And the mountain stood up.

Rocks and debris crumbled and tore off its side, creating a landslide that fell to the ground and destroyed several abscesses unintentionally.

By the time the mountain fully stood up, it was already a man.

A stone giant almost a thousand kilometers tall, completely under Iris' control.

"Go!"

"Useless, resistance!"

BOOOOOM!

The mountain swung its massive fist.

The Plague Lord was fast enough to dodge the relatively slow attack, but despite his confident words, the air pressure assaulted him from below and directly blew up the corrosive tentacles extending from his lower body.

The stone giant stepped forward over and over again. Without the exhaustion or worry for infection of a living being, it pressured the Plague Lord and disallowed him from gaining the advantage.

Iris finally had time.

And she found a strategy that worked.

Against inanimate objects, what could someone who controlled plagues do?

Her power wasn't limited to mountains, after all.

As long as she had time...

As long as she had energy...

...she could make an army with the sole purpose of slaughtering the Plague Lord!