

Void 1251

Chapter 1251 Ambush [2]

BOOM!

The second the Marionette Lord gave the order, thirteen arrows rained down on Damien's position as if they'd been waiting there from the start.

Damien was forced to teleport away, but when he came out of the spatial layers, the Strength Lord was already waiting for him.

BANG!

A powerful punch struck the forearms he just barely put up in time, throwing him back into the Venom Lord's range.

Damien gritted his teeth, twisting his body impossibly to evade the three barely perceptible needles that almost dug into his skin.

'Their teamwork is too good.'

Damien was facing three as one, and he wasn't even a Divinity. It was already a miracle that he could remain relatively undamaged as the clash began, but that wasn't enough.

'Iris is facing six. I shouldn't sit here and complain about three.'

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Three ballista bolts came from three directions, trapping Damien in a box.

As his perception spread, he saw the Venom and Strength Lords moving into position to strike him again when he dodged.

'I need to get rid of the archer first.'

The Bow Lord's strength, which had only just begun to show, was already extreme.

He could shoot regular arrows in an instant, and the ballista bolts that took a few seconds to prepare were able to instantly kill the enemy.

Moreover, his control was the reason Damien couldn't do anything.

'The Venom Lord's toxins are far worse than the other Lords who use similar abilities, but since it's venom, it won't work unless it's injected.'

It was another ability that could control his movements, but unlike what he originally expected, the Venom Lord was probably the one they wanted to deal the final strikes.

'Alright. Let's start moving.'

No time passed as he thought.

Now that he'd calmed himself and viewed the situation with a cool head, he was ready to start fighting.

WHOOOOOOSH!

Time resumed, and the roaring of winds caused by the ballista just barely inches away from him kept his attention as sharp as possible.

'Now.'

He had no choice but to teleport, but he was ready this time.

BANG! BANG!

The Strength Lord put forth two strikes with just as much power as before. His strength was controlled to the extent that they wouldn't cause extreme damage to the environment, but would give Damien as much damage as he wanted.

Damien didn't back away.

He tilted his body as he teleported and dodged the first strike and summoned his mana, pushing his own fist forward to connect with the one coming towards him.

BOOOOOM!

Damien's arm shattered on impact, but the force created by their clash pushed the Strength Lord back several steps as well.

The offset force aided Damien, and using spatial mana to guide it, it shot him towards the Venom Lord, who was still standing in the distance.

The Venom Lord grinned as if everything was going according to plan.

He raised his arm in the air, secreting a stream of venom and directly compressing it into a weapon that could pierce him.

XIU!

It blasted into the atmosphere and chased Damien's flight path. From the looks of it, he didn't have any time to evade or counterattack.

However, that was exactly Damien's expectation.

The Bow Lord was far separated from the rest. If he tried to directly target him, the other two would get in the way, and if he moved outside their expectations, the Bow Lord would force him back into the play they'd planned.

He couldn't let that happen.

His awareness allowed him a full view of the surroundings.

The venom blade was just inches away and more than sharp enough to impale him, and the Strength Lord was approaching from behind, ready to exacerbate the wound it created.

Damien grinned.

'Nice.'

That was the moment.

Flash!

His body teleported out of the mix and completely disappeared.

Unlike before, not a single wisp of his aura remained in reality, completely removing him from their perception.

Until—

BOOOOOOOOOM!

A massive explosion rang out several kilometers away.

Damien appeared directly behind the Bow Lord and struck out, finally using the combination of Spacetime and Elemental-Samsara, a force he titled Rudimentary Existence Law, to attack him.

The force of law was terrifying. It held the material existence rupturing of Elemental-Samsara, yet it also held the potential to strike the ethereal, using Spacetime as a medium to move past the physical plane.

"ARGH!"

The Bow Lord groaned in pain as he rapidly retreated, but Damien followed ceaselessly.

He couldn't use weapons, since none of them could contain his current force, but his fists were enough.

Especially since he could use the Venom Lord's strategy of compressing his mana into physical constructs.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The Bow Lord was forced to dodge and roll through the area as the surrounding mountains were torn apart. He tried to raise his bow, but he was always met with attacks before he could strike their creator.

Arrows streaked through the air, but they could only be used to offset the force that nobody expected a Supreme to control!

The Bow Lord finally realized Damien's danger, the reason why the Marionette Lord brought them all together for this attack.

After all, he understood why Iris needed to die. She was an extremely well-known powerhouse who would cause a myriad of problems once she returned to the battlefield.

But why did three of them need to focus on this small character called Damien Void?

Well, it suddenly became clear that Damien was not a small character at all.

The Bow Lord changed his strategy. He was skilled at ranged combat. The current situation only presented him with disadvantages.

"YOU TWO, COME HERE!"

He raised his bow, and instead of aiming them at Damien, he turned around and aimed his arrows at his allies who were rushing to his location.

Xiu! Xiu!

They flew just as fast but didn't have nearly as much power. Understanding his intent, the Strength and Venom Lords grabbed the arrows flying to them and gripped hold.

The Bow Lord suddenly pulled on the air, and as if they were connected to him by an ethereal string, the arrows returned to his grasp in a single instant, bringing their passengers with them.

Of course, Damien saw him acting. He couldn't prevent those two from coming, but he wasn't going to let the Bow Lord act without consequences!

He appeared behind the man and stuck his arm forward with his hand outstretched. A blade of aura formed around his fingers, swirling chaotically, and in the final moment—

SHIK!

His hand impaled the Bow Lord's chest.

'Seven Stars Encircling The Moon'

It was a variation, but the effect was the same.

The chaotic forces in his aura blade collided on command and caused a massive explosion that caused space itself to tremble.

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

Damien teleported away, narrowly avoiding the Strength Lord's incoming fist.

He twirled his body once he reappeared, swiping his hand through the air and grabbing the invisible needles that almost stuck into his forehead.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

As they fell to the ground below, he grinned.

The Bow Lord definitely didn't die, but he had a gaping hole in his right chest, and his shoulder was definitely not where it was supposed to be.

'That should at least subdue him for now, but I won't get another opportunity like that for a while.'

His target became clear with that. There was no way the other two Lords would let him easily approach the Bow Lord again.

'But that's fine. This is all according to plan.'

He didn't just rely on Seven Stars Encircling The Moon, after all. He was well aware of the impact it would have.

Instead, he used the opportunity it created to plant "something" in the Bow Lord's body.

For now, he just needed to wait for it to bloom.

His eyes were narrow and his mind was hyper-focused on survival.

Until not even one of them remained, he couldn't lower his guard at all.

'Then, the Strength Lord is next.'

Chapter 1252 Ambush [3]

'I have at least a minute before the Bow Lord returns to the battle.'

A minute wasn't a lot of time, but he didn't need much.

All he needed was to incapacitate or injure the Strength Lord, because as long as his influence decreased, Damien could fight without worry.

'That guy is at the top of the Inhuman Emperor's forces. His power is no joke.'

Damien already felt it multiple times. His bones would shatter upon contact, and nothing he did would change that.

The Venom Lord didn't have much speed, but the Strength Lord was different. His physical body itself was a weapon, and anything related to it was powerful.

In the short span of time Damien took to think, he'd already arrived in front of him, his leg wrapped back like a scorpion's tail ready to let off immense force.

There was no time to form weapon constructs.

Damien lifted his own leg, channeling Rudimentary Existence Law through his skin, and met the approaching force head-on.

BOOOOOM!

The air exploded as atoms were ripped away from existence.

Damien felt his leg shatter as expected, but the force was prevented from traveling through the rest of his body.

He was already in the process of counterattacking.

His fists went forward with force and precision, creating a flurry of unavoidable attacks that put immense pressure on the Strength Lord.

"Not bad! A worthy opponent!"

The Strength Lord laughed wildly and spread his arms, not evading at all as his eyes shone with excitement.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Damien's fists struck time after time on his exposed chest, but no matter how much Rudimentary Existence Law he used, Damien couldn't cause any substantial damage besides some bruising.

Without a choice, he fled once more, this time making thousands of kilometers of distance.

'I'm definitely putting myself at a disadvantage with a move like this, but I have no choice. That guy's skin is terrible.'

Damien shook his fist. His knuckles were bleeding just from punching the man, and he could feel his bones creaking as well.

'Unless I can get through that outer defense, I can't hope for anything.'

Damien frowned and teleported again, returning to the battleground.

He had to do some testing.

Once again, he approached the Strength Lord without fear, flurrying punches and kicks with speed that barely anyone could replicate.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The air was pushed apart by their force, and though the Venom Lord tried to provide support with his needles, this air pressure didn't give them a chance to enter the battle's range.

Damien was still wary of him, though, and had to avoid any imperceptible projectiles that managed to make it past the natural barrier as he engaged in this physical contest with the Strength Lord.

The Strength Lord himself was grinning wildly. Unlike the rest, he didn't have any obligation to listen to the Marionette Lord's orders.

He came because he sensed something fun about to occur, and he was absolutely right.

To think a Supreme could last this long against his fists!

It was definitely something he was enjoying, and he wanted to test the limits of this unexpected rival.

"COME!"

He roared, and Damien's arm instantly turned into a snake.

'There it is.'

He judged this man's personality easily. He was just like countless other muscle heads who fought with their bodies in this mana-ruled world. He craved battle above all else, and while this was usually a trait he admired, this time, it was his enemy exhibiting it.

But that was beside the point.

These kinds of bastards were the only people who liked to ramble in the heat of battle. Damien had been waiting for the moment the Strength Lord opened his mouth.

To stick his fist right into it!

"Hahahaha, you are truly a-mgph!"

"Let's see if the inside is strong too," Damien said with a grin.

The Strength Lord's eyes widened.

But it was too late.

BOOOOOOOOM!

Rudimentary Existence Law tore through his mouth and traveled down his throat, wreaking havoc on his stomach and lungs.

"Keuagh!"

The Strength Lord vomited blood and rapidly struck his fist at Damien's shoulder, shattering the connection between it and the rest of his body.

Damien's arm was already loose, and though he was in pain, the Strength Lord was relentless.

Instead of retreating, he bit down on Damien's fist to the point of drawing blood and grabbed his arm, ripping it off entirely!

"Khh...!"

Damien held his yell and teleported away, watching as the Strength Lord spit out his arm.

His eyes narrowed.

He didn't mind his arm being torn off. It would regrow in the next second.

His eyes were focused on the hand of that amputated limb.

'His teeth tore through the flesh and bones completely. He's coughing blood, but...'

The attack wasn't as effective as Damien thought.

"Kid, you're good!" The Strength Lord yelled through bloodied teeth.

"But do you think I wouldn't prepare for something like this?!"

He appeared before Damien in a single instant, his shin only centimeters away from his face.

"With skin as hard as mine, it's obvious where people will aim!"

BANG!

Damien had no choice but to take the kick. His right arm hadn't grown back enough to protect his head, after all.

Feeling his brain bounce around his skull like a pinball, he continued his retreat and stabilized himself just in time to see the enemy doing the exact same movement again.

"Anywhere you can attack from the outside, I've fortified more than you can imagine! Try my eyes next time!"

BOOOOOM!

This time, Damien's arm was back, so his head didn't suffer the same trauma.

But he was still extremely injured.

'Transcendent Regeneration isn't all-powerful. If I keep losing the same limb over and over again, the regeneration speed will slow down.'

It was a microscopic difference, but he'd now reached a level where that microscopic difference held immense weight.

'If he really fortified everything, he's a true monster. The pain of fortifying the eyes and other similar organs is immeasurable.'

Damien had to find an entrance.

'I can try to keep going for his throat, but finding chances to strike him there is hard.'

His throat wasn't completely fortified, obviously, but if it could take Rudimentary Existence Law with only enough damage to make him cough out pure blood without any organs mixed in, then it was clearly enhanced to an extreme level.

Damien could definitely kill the Strength Lord through that, but he didn't have enough time or opportunity to do so.

BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!

He continued to evade and parry the Strength Lord's attacks, but he noticed that the pattern changed.

XIU! XIU! XIU!

He was now making space for the Venom Lord to fight too. Damien was forced to take the ranged forces back into consideration as he moved, which greatly restricted him.

'But if he's acting like this, I'm onto something.'

There had to be a weakness. No person was free of flaws, even Damien.

If he could die, everyone else could die too.

Damien's thoughts raced like comets through the night sky. Damage piled on top of damage, blowing apart his flesh and shattering his bones, but he never gave up, fighting with everything to buy himself time to find the answer.

'There has to be a place.'

He said he fortified everything, but that couldn't be true.

BANG! BANG! BANG!

Damien endured strikes to his head, torso, and legs repeatedly. He felt like he was undergoing body reconstruction because of just how many times he'd been broken and put back together.

His thoughts continued to race.

'There has to be a—'

Damien endured strikes to his head, torso, and legs repeatedly.

But he suddenly noticed one place that had yet to be touched.

'Ah, there is a place.'

There were two places, in fact. Two places that couldn't be fortified not just due to biology, but other, more intrinsic factors.

Damien made sure not to direct his eyes there to avoid attracting suspicion, but...

'If I attack there...'

The code of men deemed such an action forbidden, but in this situation, the code of men meant nothing.

Damien had found the Strength Lord's only weak points.

He found the point of entry.

But...

A minute also passed.

The Strength Lord dug his foot into the ground and abruptly pushed backward.

Without warning...

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

...a ballista bolt like no other exploded in Damien's face, tearing his skin and flesh into pieces.

The Bow Lord was back.

And he was extremely angry.

Chapter 1253 Ambush [4]

"AAAARGH!"

Damien couldn't hold back his roar.

Divine Energy rocked his entire body, tearing through his internal systems and forcing him into a state of semi-implosion.

XIU! XIU! XIU!

Three venomous needles cut through the storm of mana and plunged into his chest, infecting him with toxins for the first time in this battle.

Naturally, the Ananta Matrix acted fast, siphoning the Divine Energy out of his body and into its grasp, storing it to be expunged when he called for it.

Damien reached up, and ignoring his pain, he ripped apart his chest where the needles struck before the toxins could spread, totally removing the infected area from his person.

Transcendent Regeneration rapidly went to work, but Damien wasn't planning to wait for it.

The Bow Lord was enraged, and due to that rage, he'd provided Damien the perfect opportunity.

In their battle thus far, he'd faced the skills of all three head-on. He knew what they were using, and he formed strategies to take them all down individually.

The only thing he was missing was an opportunity.

He couldn't create it himself with the way the situation was going before, but...

Who would've thought the Bow Lord would give him the perfect opening?

The skills that'd been suppressed throughout the battle by the combination tactics of the three, or the extremes they specialized in, were given a chance to shine.

His eyes were rolled back in pain, as if he was a man with no irises. Red veins bulged on his sclera, giving him the appearance of a mad demon.

He planted his foot on the ground and pushed forward.

Space and time wrapped around him, pulling tight like a yo-yo being pulled back up its string. It wasn't teleportation, but a different type of instant movement that nobody was expecting.

He shot past the Strength Lord, his hand touching the man's chest before he knew what was happening.

Damien suddenly remembered a scene Tian Yang had shown him when he was still young.

"Boom."

Mana exploded forth.

Space and time collapsed, shattering the Strength Lord's stance and throwing him into the air, his trajectory aimed straight for the Bow Lord.

Damien's steps didn't stop there. The Strength Lord was never his main target.

In the same instant, he stepped forward once more and reached the Venom Lord. His arm shot out before the man could react and gripped his neck, pulling him into the air.

"Burn."

WHOOOSH!

Void Flames lit the air on fire. The Venom Lord's body combusted, and when he opened his mouth to scream out in pain, tongues of flame intruded into his body and began burning through his glands and blood vessels.

The Venom Lord needed to secrete venoms that couldn't be dispersed through the Void Physique. The second those systems were cut off and he was forced to use only mana-based substances, his value in this battle would disappear.

Damien didn't need to do anything else to him. The Void Flame would burn eternally unless he found a way to expel them, so either the Venom Lord would be crippled or incapacitated for a considerable period.

Instead of worrying about him, Damien stomped his foot into the ground once more and shot into the air.

The Strength Lord's body that he'd thrown was perfectly positioned.

The Bow Lord couldn't find a good angle to shoot from, and by the time he'd moved to create such an angle, Damien was already behind the Strength Lord and using him as a human shield.

"You said you fortified everything, right?" He asked, his words icy to the point of sending shivers down the Demigod's spine.

"Let's test that theory."

Damien raised his knee with as much force as possible, loading it full of compressed Rudimentary Existence Law.

And he attacked the heavenly jewels.

The "place that should not be mentioned."

"AAAAAAAAAAGH!"

The Strength Lord screamed out in ways he didn't think possible.

A beam of light split his body from bottom to top, and Damien's mana traveled through the most degenerate pathways to reach the internals it couldn't reach before.

Havoc once again appeared in the Strength Lord's body, and this time, it wasn't easily avoidable.

Blood sprayed from his seven orifices as well as some less-than-savory areas, creating a cloud of blood mist in the air that further obstructed the Bow Lord's vision.

"Dammit!"

The Bow Lord exclaimed, aiming his bow into the blood mist and spreading his awareness.

He didn't expect Damien to make such an extreme move with just a single opening.

It made him realize that if any of them were facing him alone, they'd have died ten times over by now!

None of them were dead, but the man whose appearance was so mangled that he looked like a walking corpse had brought them to a state where none of them could properly use their power.

It was unbelievable!

Especially if one remembered that he was a Supreme!

"You're slower than before."

The Bow Lord jumped back as the voice appeared from behind him and instantly shot a barrage of arrows in its direction.

But Damien was already gone by the time they reached.

"Did you not realize it because of your rage? Or maybe the pain I gave you was too prominent for you to realize that it shouldn't have existed at all."

The Bow Lord felt a hand on his head. An immense pressure crushed him into the ground. His body was trembling as a feeling of hopelessness filled his mind.

"Did you think that was your own feeling?"

Damien's words were beyond confusing.

If it wasn't his, then who—

"Have you checked the state of your soul recently?"

The Bow Lord's eyes widened.

On instinct, he sent his senses inward and looked at the ethereal plane he never even considered due to the enemy's state of existence.

And that's when he saw it.

Half of his soul was eroded. It used to look like an archer constellation, valiant and proud, but that constellation was now without its legs or weapon, utterly humiliated.

"I've come to take back what I gave you."

The first death.

Damien planned it from the start.

Before anyone else, the Bow Lord had to die.

And for that, he'd created a situation where the Bow Lord would never have the time, thought, or ability to check his soul for strangeness.

The single greatest advantage he held as a lower existence on the Ancient Battlefield.

The fact that nobody would ever believe he could interact with the soul plane.

He abused that fact to create this very situation, so with his own power, he could—

"—devour."

The Bow Lord's eyes rolled back in his head. His soul was directly stripped from his body and turned into Damien's power.

As the soulless body was burned into nothingness by Rudimentary Existence Law, Damien turned back to the other two.

The Strength Lord looked relatively okay, besides the absolute hatred painting his face, while the Venom Lord was clawing at his own skin with a terrified expression on his face.

Meanwhile, Damien himself didn't look much better. He tore away the infected area as best as possible, but without precise measurements, he wasn't able to get rid of it all.

His chest was covered in blackish-purple veins of toxin that were making him feel burning pain to his very core. Moreover, that chest was still ripped apart and ruined, a mass of reddish muscle and flesh chunks without skin.

He had several broken bones, and even his brain was affected by the Strength Lord's earlier kick. With this grotesque appearance, it wasn't surprising that others saw him as a walking corpse.

Since Transcendent Regeneration was focused on keeping the toxins restrained in his torso, the non-fatal wounds on his body would remain exposed until he could sit down and fix everything with [Heal].

'But...Transcendent Regeneration still exists, doesn't it?'

In the end, he'd be fine.

But what about them?

Damien grinned to himself.

"A eunuch and a cripple. The rest should be a breeze."

Chapter 1254 Ambush [5]

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The shockwaves from Damien's fight beginning ran rampant, but Iris and the Marionette Lord hadn't moved yet.

It seemed the Marionette Lord was still of the mind to toy with her food. They were waiting for Iris to act first so they could thoroughly crush her will.

As for Iris, she naturally needed to understand her opponent before doing anything rash.

The Marionette Lord was one thing.

They were strong because of the four Demigod Puppets they controlled, but their individual strength was said to be close to nothing.

The Insect Lord was also a problem, but not a huge one.

They likely brought him along for the sole purpose of annoying her.

The Insect Lord had great power over a large crowd of weak enemies. He could also enhance the abilities of others, as his bugs could carry friendly mana over greater distances and be used as chargeable grenades.

But since the Marionette Lord wasn't someone who could benefit from those abilities and Iris wasn't someone who'd be affected by them, his presence was practically worthless.

Though, the fact that he was here meant the opponents were six. Since that six included some of the strongest in the Inhuman Emperor's forces, it wasn't simple even for Iris.

'I need to test their power first.'

She had to gauge the Demigod Puppets to form any real plan, so despite knowing what her opponent was waiting for, she didn't have a choice but to move according to their predictions.

She raised her hand in the air gracefully and emitted fluctuations of rainbow mana, which transmuted into several metallic constructs that swept through the air.

Xiu! Xiu! Xiu! Xiu!

The Marionette Lord grinned happily and flicked their wrist. A chair made of Divine Energy appeared behind them, and as they sat down, the Demigod Puppets moved.

The four of them were split evenly with two men and two women. Instead of Nox, they seemed to be traitors from the Grand Heavens Boundary side.

While it was surely infuriating to see, it also wasn't. For one, this kind of fate was worthy of traitors, and made them even more pathetic than they already were.

And secondly, because they were from the universe, Iris knew much more about them than Nox Demigods.

'These four...those two are from Blood Asura Holy Land, she's from Fallen Star Holy Land, and the last is from the Looming Shadow Cult.'

Their names were Jerome, Acian, Helen, and Treya.

They didn't have particularly noteworthy titles, which was probably half the reason for their betrayal, but Iris didn't need much time to analyze their abilities watching how they dodged her attacks.

'The Blood Asura guys are mid and long-ranged combatants, the Fallen Star woman uses lightning for close-range attacks, and the last is an assassin.'

It was an efficient combo on paper, but if these people ever tried to work together, they'd just get in the way of each other's skills.

However, in this case, such a situation wouldn't happen.

Jerome, the mid-ranged Blood Asura Demigod, was good at controlling the direction of incoming attacks and helping Acian, his ranged brother, gain opportunities to block them.

Meanwhile, Helen and Treya were acting independently from each other, but their movements seemed to connect in ways Iris couldn't quite see.

'Difficult.'

That was her first impression.

Since they were being controlled by the Marionette Lord, their movements would never overlap, and they'd show synergy above anyone else.

Moreover, without consciousness, the minor mistakes they'd usually make in battle were mitigated, leaving Iris with barely any openings.

'But it's possible.'

She turned her eyes to the Insect Lord just briefly.

He hadn't acted yet, but if she could get him to interfere in the battle, she could find a chance to take the four of them down without a problem.

'After all, unlike the rest, I know that guy very well.'

Was it six thousand years ago?

When Iris was still a fledgling in universal terms, she'd seen this man in combat against the superiors of her sect.

After that, due to the strangeness of his Demonic Providence, he became one of several Nox Demigods whom Prismatic Sun Holy Land studied.

She probably knew more about his abilities than even he did.

'This should be enough.'

For preliminary information, she had enough. She couldn't stay passive and give the Marionette Lord any opportunities to exploit, so instead of remaining in this probing phase, she preferred directly engaging in combat.

She didn't like how she was being looked at.

Like a weakling, like an object that only existed for their entertainment.

It reminded her of the way the Ancient Sovereign looked down on her.

It reminded her of her flaws.

So, while she didn't want to get emotional, she couldn't help it.

She had to show them why she was considered one of the universe's strongest.

BOOOOOOOOOM!

The explosion rang out late as if it couldn't trace the location where it was supposed to take place at.

Without warning, thousands of spikes rose from the earth and turned into golems that exploded on the Demigod Puppets, the same strategy she used on the Plague Lord.

However, it was only meant to be a distraction.

Iris flew forward, rising up above the Demigod Puppets and bringing her arm down.

'Forces of Wind.'

Through Universal Law, there were several abilities she'd realized. But, she later learned that abilities were superfluous.

For something like Universal Law, using it directly was better.

Forces of Wind did exactly that. It gave the wind an order and allowed the wind to accomplish it however it pleased.

The current order?

Decimation.

VOOOOOOOOM!

The air suddenly became several times heavier. Like pressure from the heavens themselves, it bore down on the Demigod Puppets and inhibited their movements.

'Forces of Earth.'

Iris instantly followed with another attack. The earth golems she created suddenly turned into mud, which collected into a massive mountain that spawned in the midst of the battlefield.

Was that it?

Of course not!

The mountain was just an exterior shell.

Forces of Earth had a different purpose than the Forces of Wind.

It wasn't meant to be used yet, so this was the best form for it to take.

Until then...

'Forces of Metal.'

'Forces of Fire.'

She used them together, creating structures on the mountain's surface that turned it into a heavy-duty fortress.

In a single instant, massive cannons and ranged weapons formed on the mountain, and by her command...

"Fire."

...they let loose their fury.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

XIU! XIU! XIU! XIU!

Explosive clouds filled the air. The Demigod Puppets were wrapped inside of them and assaulted on all sides by chaotic Divine Energy.

The current scene was one of mayhem and destruction, and with Iris as its creator, it seemed like she held the upper hand.

But both she and her enemies were very clear on the truth.

She didn't have the upper hand at all.

In fact, the situation could be called barely balanced.

Because despite all the force let off by her attacks, enough to cripple the three Demigods Damien was fighting...

The Demigod Puppets had yet to take a single point of damage.

Chapter 1255 Ambush [6]

Iris was still using Universal Law, so it was natural that she couldn't cause much damage to forces of this level, but it was necessary.

She was currently extremely unconfident about her true affinity, because she was in the midst of self-discovery related to it, so she couldn't use it properly.

Nevertheless, her choice was a mistake.

WHOOOOSH!

With a pulse of wind, the four Demigod Puppets broke free of the bombardment and shot forward, encircling her in an instant.

Iris gritted her teeth and raised her mana for defense.

This was the real start of the battle.

Jerome and Helen were the main damage dealers. From two sides, bolts of blood and lightning forced her to continue expending Divine Energy on thick defenses that could withstand penetration.

This gave Acian an opportunity to attack wantonly. Long-ranged blood magic consisted of several different abilities, but the one he specialized in before becoming a puppet was pure power.

He could summon massive storms of blood, letting his blood mana take on strange properties that had different effects.

But of all Blood Asura Demigods, the ones who focused on direct power were a different breed.

Blood magic was meant to be used more subtly. Its specialties were control and enhancement.

Since they took such an element to the extreme, it was only natural their power would be strange.

OOOOOOOOOOH!

The air roared as storms of blood consumed it. A crimson dome surrounded the group, blocking them off from the outside world and sealing the space Iris could move in.

Jerome and Helen never stopped barraging her, making her unable to use other abilities, and while Iris couldn't see her, Treya was waiting in the shadows for an opportunity to take her head.

This situation couldn't go on.

Iris wasn't someone who'd allow it to.

But, while she could usually use Universal Law to move the world itself to her advantage, she couldn't do so in the Ancient Battlefield.

It hindered her so much until now, and it was continuing to hinder her here as well.

Did the Marionette Lord know?

Were they aware of Iris' weakened state?

If they chose this opportunity to attack with that information, Iris really would be in a corner.

'Predicting my weakness...if so, they've completely understood the abilities of Universal Law.'

She could practically see the future. If she kept struggling like this, she'd lose pathetically. Perhaps the Insect Lord wouldn't need to get involved.

'Is this how I want to die?'

The answer was a massive, indomitable "NO!"

If she wanted to even properly fight with forces of this caliber, if she wanted to show her true power that should've been almost on par with an Emperor...

'...I can no longer hesitate.'

It didn't matter if she was scared or indecisive.

In the first place, that mindset was flawed.

Those blockages only existed because she allowed them to.

'To stop thinking and just do, huh...'

It was a mentality Damien used often. She saw its effects clearly, since he was confidently fighting three Demigods who he should've logically been slaughtered ruthlessly by in a single second.

'Can I do it too?'

The attacks kept coming.

Her surroundings were becoming more suffocating, and it looked like Treya would move at any moment.

The Insect Lord still hadn't gotten involved either. He must've thought he wasn't needed in this battle.

She couldn't just sit here and take it.

Not anymore.

'I was born with it. It's just as much a part of me as my soul. Why am I so afraid of it?'

Why was she so averse to using it?

The reason...

'...'

She finally remembered it.

"That day."

The day a young Eyrrisea Luminus was kidnapped and brutally tortured as those consumed by greed tried to extract her affinity.

She was only sixteen years old at that time. She had barely entered the world of magic and mana, and she was clueless about the true value of her affinity.

Because of it, she almost lost everything. She was crippled for almost a decade afterward, and despite the care of the highest physicians in Prismatic Sun Holy Land, she never truly healed from those injuries until almost a hundred years later.

And, if it wasn't for the timely arrival of her seniors, who took her out of that hell, she would've lost her innocence as well.

It was a horrifying memory even for the current Iris. It was a memory she'd repressed subconsciously and even stopped using her affinity altogether to avoid.

Because that wasn't the first or second time.

When she was nine, a similar situation happened. When she was just healing after the kidnapping when she was sixteen, it almost happened again.

And when she finally went out into the wider world on her own, she faced so many similar situations that she almost lost her mind.

It was too attractive to those people.

Not Eyrrisea Luminus, but the affinity she carried.

It was almost three hundred years into her long life when she decided to quit.

She threw away that affinity and found another path forward.

That was how the greed of people shifted from her affinity to her person.

But even then, she quit again. She refused ascension so she wouldn't have to see people stronger than her who could return her to that helpless state.

'Ah...'

That was the source of her fear.

She was far above those people in the lower universe. Even if new enemies came coveting it, she now had the power to protect herself.

But she was deathly afraid of her current relationships being tainted by its presence.

And she was deathly afraid of regressing.

She didn't want to return to that time, when the only reason she held worth was the affinity everybody wanted to plunder.

This sealed space, this cage of blood and violence where she had no choice but to wait until she was whittled away into nothingness...

This was what that affinity represented to her.

But, it could no longer be the source of her fear.

Because if she died here, she'd lose all the things she wanted to protect anyway.

'I am not weak anymore.'

She spoke to herself, unneeding of outside witnesses.

'I am not someone who must rely on others, nor do I need validation from others to be happy.'

She had to understand that it wasn't her fault.

This affinity was given to her at birth, not something she wished for. Why did she have to cower and hide it away because other people were bastards?

'It isn't my fault.'

It wasn't her fault.

So, instead of fearing them, fearing what they would become, she needed to rise above them, so they could never hold such thoughts about her.

And if the few people she truly cared about in this world decided to betray her...

Well, then that was their fault.

For getting consumed by greed and losing themselves.

'Even if everyone else changes...'

She gave herself a final piece of consolation, just as a cherry on top so she could make the final push to break free from her shackles.

'...I have absolute faith that at least one will remain by my side.'

She smiled.

Her worth, she understood it.

The worth of that affinity, she understood as well.

But that was still just a part of her worth. It was never something that should've consumed her.

Realizing that was the first step.

Perhaps her trauma and paranoia wouldn't leave her in a single day, but she'd made the first step towards improvement.

And that was the key.

The brown-haired Eyrrisea Luminus, the appearance she was born with.

This was the side of her she repressed. It remained in the appearance she had in her twenties, when she was still recovering from the aftereffects of that kidnapping.

She locked that side of her away where nobody could see, and as she grew and lived, her original appearance changed into what it was today, eccentric yet beyond beautiful.

It wasn't a facade, but a different side of her. This was the side of her that protected her weakness and disallowed the world from coming in contact with it.

But the need to hide away her weakness was fading.

And slowly, the line between her two selves was blurring.

Iris was on the path to becoming whole again.

And the power she received as if to congratulate her for such an achievement...

Well, it was quite monstrous!

Chapter 1256 Ambush [7]

The whole world stopped for a moment.

There reached a point where the laws held more spirituality than those who wielded them. Because of how much they meant to the universe, they realized the ability to choose who was worthy of their power.

These laws were extremely esoteric. They became picky to the point where only a handful of people in the entirety of existence could be chosen to be their users.

Iris was one of those people, chosen at birth by her law.

But she had been unable to live up to its expectations.

It wasn't her fault, of course, but laws were objective. They did not hold emotions like living entities to look upon situations and understand why things turned out a certain way.

But, Iris was never abandoned.

She never abandoned her affinity, but because of her repressed memories, she refused to show it to the world.

This was the moment when she started overcoming the things that held her back, and the law that was waiting for this instance finally allowed its power to bloom.

VOOOOOM!

The blood world that trapped Iris with her enemies was directly shattered by a great force of mana.

Her body became ethereal, a strange illusion of two different projections that were slowly floating towards each other.

A sacred light emanated from her figure. It didn't seem to have a set color, but its color always remained pure. It was a mixture of countless known forces, as it was a force that stood above them all and ruled them.

Iris had her eyes closed.

Her mind was in a state of enlightenment.

The things she'd comprehended from this law over the course of her life finally came together, and the vague picture she had of it finally reached a point where she could understand it.

The path forward was no longer blocked.

Whether by herself or her affinity, the path was no longer impeded.

Demigods who refused ascension cut off their path to the Heavenly World and greater power. This was a known fact to even the youngest practitioners who'd been in contact with the Divine.

However, unbeknownst to them, the path wasn't completely cut off.

There was one more chance.

And that chance was the Ancient Battlefield.

The Ancient Battlefield was originally a piece of the Heavenly World that got torn away and consumed by the lower universe's laws to become what it currently was.

Not only could it house Divinities with ease, it also presented them a second chance to change their decision and seek greater heights.

Of course, this opportunity was only granted to the winning side. Only after all enemies were felled would the road open.

But Iris had a goal now.

She wanted to take this affinity to its peak and she wanted to see the heights she forbade from herself due to fear.

And she didn't want to do it alone.

To win this war, to actualize her ambitions...

She would survive.

She would not let herself be taken down by the forces of evil.

Her eyes flashed open.

Her arm once again raised gracefully into the air, perpendicular to her body.

This was an unconscious action, but her mouth still moved as if she was actively controlling it.

"Star Formation."

The words were subtle, but it was as if they were projected all across the Ancient Battlefield.

And along with them...

VOOOOOOOOOOOM!

A huge outpour of mana.

The four Demigod Puppets were pushed back several hundred kilometers, and around Iris, the atmosphere heated up to an extreme.

Within a few instants, it boiled over. Chaotic energies clashed against each other like forces of the universe, and a burning celestial body appeared from nothing.

It wasn't just an imitation like Damien had made many times before.

It was a true star.

Completely under Iris' jurisdiction.

"Burst."

BOOOOOOOOOOOM!

The chaotic radioactive force exploded, rocking the entire environment and incinerating the surrounding mountains.

The Marionette Lord retreated with widened eyes, while the Insect Lord stood before them and released his swarm.

The insects were burned one after the other, but they mitigated and absorbed a large majority of the force, keeping the two backline combatants safe.

Though, the Demigod Puppets weren't so lucky.

Because the Marionette Lord was forced to retreat and lost control for a moment, they acted purely on instinct.

Treya and Helen directly retreated, using their Divine Energy to protect their bodies as best they could.

Meanwhile, as Jerome and Acian did the same, they realized their speed wasn't nearly enough to take them away from the blast radius.

They acted as Blood Asura disciples would.

Shik!

Before Jerome knew what was happening, a string of blood stabbed through his chest.

Acian, who wielded it, threw him forward and used the force to escape, sacrificing his comrade for the sake of survival.

Of them all, only Jerome was forced to take the full force of the attack head-on, but its effects were clear.

His skin was burned to a crisp and his blood evaporated away. No matter how he tried to defend himself, the explosive force only compounded, shattering his barriers and protections and making a mess of his body.

"Hmm..."

Iris hummed slightly as her consciousness returned to her body.

Looking around and seeing the scene she caused, her eyes sparkled in wonder.

"So this is it..." she muttered.

"Creation."

One of the two greatest laws a normal existence could comprehend.

No, one of the two greatest laws under existence.

That was the identity of Iris' neglected affinity, and the reason she'd been tortured during her youth.

But now, it would become the source of her strength.

The reason she would be regarded as one of the greatest to ever live!

Creation wasn't just about material creation. It wasn't just about controlling the forces of the world.

Creation controlled everything that could be created.

Stars, planets, and even universes weren't excluded from its grasp.

Nor were the laws that were created with it as a basis.

Iris glanced at her surroundings.

Damien's battle had moved very far away from her, so she couldn't see them, but judging from the fluctuations, he was still going strong.

Which meant she could fight without worry.

She flashed through the air, approaching Jerome first.

The man was already nearing death, but she wouldn't allow it to come so easily to a traitor.

"Live."

She spoke one word, a divine commandment, as she grabbed his neck.

The aura of vitality forced its way into his body. It didn't heal him, but it did bring him back to life.

But that life was fully controlled by Iris.

"Go."

She latched onto his emotions and pushed them to the extreme.

The betrayal of a comrade he'd just experienced, the thirst for vengeance he felt from it consumed his mind, and without question, he blasted towards Acian.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

With his new nigh-immortal body, Jerome pushed Acian without relenting. He knew his fellow disciple better than anyone, so when it came to cornering him, there wasn't a better choice.

With the long-ranged dealer out of the picture, Iris turned her attention to Helen and Treya, as well as the Marionette Lord who controlled them.

That person's expression was no longer playful.

It was cold and cruel, far more fitting of their character.

The Marionette Lord didn't completely understand what just happened, but they were well aware of their opponent's growth.

This was the opposite of what they wanted.

They didn't want to see Iris grow.

They wanted to crush her and see her hopeless expression before she died.

And for that...

"You, go over there."

...they needed to be more serious.

Iris' fight...was only just beginning.

Chapter 1257 Ambush [8]

Within seconds, the intensity increased exponentially.

As the Marionette Lord became serious, they instantly used Acian to kill Jerome for good while sending Helen and Treya to constantly pressure Iris.

Iris was originally someone who fought from a distance. She swerved through the atmosphere, avoiding the two puppets who constantly tried to close the distance while attacking.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Star Formation wasn't the only move she knew, but it was the most effective in the current circumstance. Instead of forming massive stars like the one she used at first, she compressed their area to the size of a basketball and maintained as much force as possible to create projectiles.

They exploded through the atmosphere and caused space to tremble like the strings of a guitar. No matter how much the Marionette Lord tried to push her puppets closer, they weren't able to unless they wanted them to burn to cinders.

Acian would soon rejoin the battle, but until then, they had to rely on the Insect Lord.

The Demigod finally entered the mix instead of standing at the back.

His swarms were filled with poisonous and venomous bugs, as well as those with bite force far exceeding the toughness of a Demigod's outer protection.

Some of them even ate mana, making his repertoire a truly terrifying thing to face.

When he first entered the battle, he started with a swarm of locusts.

Before Acian could return to combat, Helen and Treya needed a way to reach Iris, and that's exactly what he provided.

Through his locusts, Helen could project her lightning energy far faster and further than she could on her own. She could create ranged attacks with far more power than the Marionette Lord could force her to produce even by drawing out her life force.

BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!

The lightning strikes were severe. Iris was forced to put up several barriers and start moving more carefully because of them, but this was also her intention.

'As long as he uses those...'

There was a specific insect in the Insect Lord's arsenal that Iris wanted to draw out, but the circumstances weren't right yet.

'Even if I kill everyone else, he won't use it. I have to pressure him personally.'

She had to make him eat a loss.

And the best way to do that?

'Naturally, it's overload.'

Iris clenched her fist and removed her defenses.

BANG!

An arc of lightning instantly hit her chest, but while wincing in pain, Iris forced that energy into her body and rapidly understood its structure.

She clenched her fist tightly, and arcs of rainbow lightning of her own appeared on its surface.

'Good.'

She didn't realize how versatile Creation was before. She used it to control the elements and create constructs out of thin air, but she never realized she could do something like this.

Pressing her arm forward, she shot out thousands of lightning spears that precisely struck Helen's incoming lightning.

The combined force created a chaotic mana wave that spread through the Insect Lord's locust swarm, and as the locusts absorbed more and more of the mana, they began twitching strangely.

Iris didn't let up.

BANG! BANG! BANG!

Every shot Helen took was stolen and redirected by her, forced into the locust swarm for absorption.

With the passing of only a few seconds, it reached a level they could no longer bear.

From behind the swarm, the Insect Lord grinned widely.

"Expel!"

He ordered them to let loose the energy however they could.

Instead of breaking them down, the energy Iris supplied would be used to strike her back!

Or at least, that was the goal.

But Iris didn't look the least bit worried.

Because she knew exactly how these locusts operated.

Once they were ordered to expel what they'd absorbed, it was impossible for the process to be halted.

Iris gathered her mana and thought about Damien. More specifically, the power he'd used to fight these past years.

"Seclude."

The command she gave was different, but the effect was the same.

Space solidified into a massive cube that encompassed the entire locust swarm, including the Insect Lord.

The cube compressed several times, forcing them into a space they could barely inhabit, and, within the second, the inevitable happened.

The locusts that couldn't expel the Divine Energy within them properly were forced to explode.

BOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

The explosion was isolated and couldn't be heard from the outside world, but it shone so bright it blinded everyone nearby.

Iris didn't waste time appreciating her work.

She was already doing many things she'd never expected possible just moments ago, so this was nothing.

Creation wasn't an inherently offensive law.

It held power over pure energy, and could be used to create anything, but it could not be used to spread destruction, as that was a job held by its sister law.

Instead, a user of creation had to be intuitive.

Using the opponent's force against them, creating natural offenses through exploding creations like Iris did through Star Formation, or mobilizing constructs formed through the law.

Iris was currently learning.

She was able to only use a few abilities because she still had to realize how to mobilize her power destructively.

After all, she couldn't always maintain a passive stance in battle. She couldn't just let the enemy pressure her because she was waiting for the perfect opportunity to strike.

So, while she kept the Insect Lord in mind for her final plan, she stopped hesitating and approached Helen and Treya.

A close combat battle began between them.

Helen used a lightning spear, while Iris didn't particularly use any weapons. For the sake of the battle, she summoned several weapons that she could cycle through, but it was only a temporary measure.

Naturally, Iris lost in terms of pure skill. Her power was enough to bridge the gap, but as she looked for opportunities to utilize her new abilities, she showed many openings that could've been prevented.

And those openings were abused by Treya, who hid in the shadows.

The clanging of metal against metal, the guttural tearing of flesh ripping apart; the sounds of pure battle filled the air.

Both Iris and her opponents took damage, but none of them experienced anything fatal.

And at some point, Acian was brought back into the equation. Jerome was left as a corpse on the cold ground, and the Marionette Lord was clearly trying to pay back the humiliation they received from being forced to destroy one of their own puppets.

Iris was once again surrounded and thrown into a blood world, but this time, she was ready for it.

She was separated from external forces.

Even if the Marionette Lord wanted to do something to interfere, they could only do so by using one of the three remaining puppets or taking down the blood world.

Both of which were situations Iris was ready for.

She had a thought after completing Star Formation a few times.

Of the energies of the universe, which ones could she use as effectively as that, to create impacts like that, but while lowering the casting time and increasing the output?

She was searching for a "perfect" move.

And though she hadn't found it, she had an idea.

She raised both arms into her hands and chanted it into reality.

"Personal Reality."

Chapter 1258 Ambush [9]

Personal Reality.

Surprisingly, Iris realized one of the strongest abilities of Creation from the start. Though it was incomplete, it could be considered a testament to her ten thousand years of comprehension.

A formless energy wave spread from her body and encapsulated the space inhabited by all but the Marionette Lord, superimposing a different form of reality onto what already existed.

This ability, by all intents and purposes, was for creation. It was meant to make something similar to Damien's Sanctuary, which could be used however the creator pleased.

However, wasn't this best for Iris?

After all, once she made her incomplete Personal Reality, she was once again put in contact with a force that was nigh absent from the Ancient Battlefield.

Universal Law.

WHOOOOOOOSH!

Iris suddenly regained a portion of the power she held in the lower universe, the power that made her feared.

Without waiting a single instant, she flashed forward, closing the distance between her and Acian as she pushed her hands together to form a seal.

'Bind.'

Acian tried to move, creating a blood wave to push Iris away, but before he could complete his movements, his body was bound as if a rope was tied around him.

'Seal.'

In the same instant, Iris gave another command and sealed his mana.

He couldn't prevent her approach at all, and as he watched with widened eyes, she appeared right before him.

"Die."

She swept her arm through the air, a move to cleanly decapitate him.

However, he wasn't alone.

Clang!

Treya appeared from the void and used a dagger to deflect Iris' arm while swinging the other one at her neck.

Iris glanced over coldly and flicked her finger.

'Expand.'

Space stretched to infinity. Despite her movement speed remaining the same, Treya couldn't even begin to close the distance between them.

"Poison, as expected of an assassin."

The reason Iris couldn't take the hit directly was precisely because of the poison that was already corroding the skin on her arm.

Demigod poisons were far more terrifying than regular ones. If it had the capability to harm a Divine Vessel, it had the potential to infiltrate the soul.

These poisons absolutely couldn't be contracted if one could help it, and if they were, they had to be expelled immediately.

Luckily for Iris, she was currently the overlord of this space.

She flicked her finger again, and the poison collecting in her skin appeared in the air as a globular floating ball.

Glancing back at Treya, she smiled lightly and moved again, stealing the poison coating the daggers as well.

"Just in time."

BANG!

A terrifying arc of lightning approached from the back. A spear shot towards her back with untold speed, but Iris wouldn't allow it to reach her.

'Lightning.'

The best way to fight the combative element was with a stronger variation of itself.

From the sky above, a bolt of pure Heavenly Lightning struck down, evaporating Helen's spear and traveling into her body.

"Khhh...!"

She hissed in pain as her mana collided with the stronger lightning.

She moved to cleanse it, but in that moment, a substance entered her body through her pores.

"Enjoy."

Iris smiled.

The poison was properly redistributed.

Now, it was time to get back to what she was originally doing.

She looked over at the bound Acian, who was practically trembling in fear.

"Have you returned to your senses somewhat? I'm sure the Marionette Lord isn't making you cower," she said scornfully.

"That's good. Since you are mentally present, fully understand the consequences of betraying your homeland."

She shoved her palm onto his face.

"Heavenly Flames."

The Heavenly Flames, one of the strongest flames on the Heavenly Flame Index and its namesake. It came as an envoy of Universal Law and barely appeared in the universe, but it only had one purpose.

To burn a target to the extent of its sins.

"AAAAAAAAGH!"

Acian screamed out in agony. A massive blaze consumed his body, but instead of killing him directly, it burned through his vessel and soul, slowing down time so he could experience thousands and thousands of years of torture every second.

'Transmit.'

Iris didn't miss the chance to cause greater damage.

She found the source of his connection with the Marionette Lord in his soul and forced it open for the flames to traverse.

The Marionette Lord would definitely cut it off before experiencing anything noteworthy, but the humiliation was all Iris wanted to give them.

In just a few seconds after opening a Personal Reality, Iris had taken complete control over the situation.

The amount of poison in Helen's body was overwhelming. Her body and soul would be melted into sludge with time, and the pain she was in wouldn't allow her to participate in the battle.

Acian's state didn't need to be mentioned either. Just like his co-puppet, he would only die after enduring soul-rending torture.

Now, Treya and the Insect Lord.

The Insect Lord was one matter. He had yet to make any serious moves after freeing himself from the space prison, but he hadn't taken much damage from the Divine Energy explosions either.

'Judging by his expression, he must've lost a considerable number of bugs to protect himself. If I just rile him up a bit more...'

The Insect Lord was a coward. He never fought on the frontlines because of the fear he held for his life, and when he did, he would always make sure he was in an absolutely advantageous position.

Losses like the one he faced against Prismatic Sun Holy Land only served to make him more cowardly, and the chances of him bringing out the truly deadly skills in his arsenal, those he wouldn't be able to use again once he let them loose, was nil.

Therefore, Iris had to push him.

Iris was well-known, so he definitely knew her affiliation. His rage and hatred due to that was likely the reason he chose to participate in this battle at all.

Iris also worked to exacerbate this feeling by humiliating him instead of making any serious moves against him, and above all, the torture of these Demigod Puppets would've reflected in his eyes as his future if he continued to stay still.

It was only a matter of time before Iris received what she wanted from him, so until then, she had to take care of the less worthy prey.

Treya, the last Demigod Puppet controlled by the Marionette Lord, was still furiously trying to find an opening in Iris' stance,

She was drifting through the void like a lone asteroid unseen by all, charging an attack that would surely kill the enemy without offering a chance for resistance.

Or at least, that's what she thought.

Iris shoved her arm out and clenched space between her fingers.

Crash!

Space itself shattered, revealing Treya's position instantly.

Her eyes widened in panic as she rapidly tried to retreat, but it was already too late.

Iris was upon her, and she'd already understood the best torture to use against a dweller of the darkness like her.

Wasn't it simple?

'Purification.'

Any and all things would be purified and become one with the mana of the world.

However, if those things were harmful to the ecosystem, they'd have to be burned by light until they could become beneficial.

More than anyone else, Iris was astonished by her abilities.

The enemies she was struggling against were now toys for her to play with.

This was her true power.

This was the power she was blocked from by the actions of others.

She relished in that feeling.

In the second she had before she had to return to battle, she felt it in all its glory, basking in its radiance.

Her body felt light, and her heart felt like it was about to burst out of her chest from all her excitement.

And now, there were only two enemies left.

Iris grinned to herself, confidence filling every corner of her vessel and soul.

It was time to end this fight...

...and make her debut on a grander stage!

Chapter 1259 Ambush [10]

Direct combat against the Insect Lord.

It was only possible now because the Marionette Lord couldn't interfere in the Personal Reality, and while this was the battle Iris was most equipped for, that didn't mean it'd be easy.

She immediately made distance once she killed Treya and made her intentions clear.

The Insect Lord was more than aware of her plans, and as he saw the last line of defense fall, his survival instincts kicked in.

Bzzzzzz!

The buzzing of fast-beating wings filled the atmosphere. Tens of thousands of locusts, wasps, and mosquitos filled the air in a horde that couldn't be driven away easily.

And their target was clear.

They swarmed Iris, who retreated constantly, and attacked her in formation. The three species that should've been fighting each other for a piece of her acted in perfect tandem to drive her into a corner.

Iris' eyes narrowed.

'How should I go about this...?'

Her state was much more relaxed than when the battle started, so she was able to entertain her thoughts and try to form a plan of action to achieve the results she wanted.

'In the end, I'm trying to use him for my own benefit. If I just wanted to kill him, it'd be easy.'

Iris swept her hand through the air, sending waves of pure energy into the swarm.

The energy split into multiple variations, some poisonous and some fiery, to attack the weaknesses of the species the Insect Lord sent after her.

It was an effective method that didn't strain her much, but it wasn't the most destructive force she could use.

'How do I draw it out?'

She had to figure it out.

Instead of any of the other insects in his arsenal, she needed to get the Insect Lord to use the specific one she wanted.

'If so...'

She would have to suffer a bit for long-term benefit.

'It's time to push.'

At first, she figured she shouldn't use too much offensive force so as to not scare him away, but she realized her thoughts were wrong.

He wouldn't use that creature unless the battle reached the absolute worst possible scenario for him, and she needed to create that scenario.

Which also meant...

'I'll have to face some things I don't want to.'

"Star Formation."

Iris instantly used the move again, creating a massive solar mass that burned through the swarm attacking her. Without an ounce of hesitation, she pushed forward and reached the Insect Lord in a second.

BANG!

She cut her arm through the air, turning it into a blade.

The Insect Lord's eyes widened.

His body was weak.

He was not someone who fought, he was someone who commanded others to fight, so his body was the weakest a Demigod's could be.

If he took Iris' direct attacks, he'd be injured without much of a fight at all!

SWISH!

He retreated backward in panic while summoning another swarm, this time airborne ants that radiated a strange heat.

"Freeze."

Nevertheless, elemental properties could no longer faze Iris.

She spoke a single word, and her breath turned into an icy mist that spread through the ants. Each and every one was frozen down to their cores, and their fires were extinguished before they could even be shown.

She rushed through the falling icicles and approached the Insect Lord again.

BOOM!

Another swarm.

BOOM!

Another swarm.

BOOM!

The Insect Lord gritted his teeth.

At this point, he was just wasting his troops this way. No matter how many regular swarms he sent out, Iris would easily destroy them and find her way into his range.

'There's no choice!'

He had to stop hesitating.

As he saw Iris' blade-like arm on its path to run him through again, he gnashed his teeth and threw away his emotions.

Those creatures he'd spent so much time to acquire, the ones that he couldn't use again unless he found more of them, the ones he only had a few of and meant everything to him, he could no longer hoard them.

"Go!"

He yelled hoarsely and flicked his sleeve.

Three beetles came out and latched onto Iris' arm mid-swing.

She didn't have time to react

"Khhhh...!"

The beetles easily ripped apart her flesh and bones with their pincers, giving her the worst injury she'd sustained since the battle began.

Seeing the opening he created, the Insect Lord became bolder.

"The rest of you!"

He flicked his sleeve several more times, and each time, a different creature came out.

A bee with a stinger that was more similar to a drill, an ant that enlarged to the size of a house, and even a moth that seemed to harness the power of the world.

They were all corrupted by his inky black energy and in a berserk state where they attacked Iris as if she were their mortal enemy.

And Iris did her best to combat them.

These were the unique creatures in his arsenal. Unlike the ones she'd faced before, they all had extreme power that had to be feared like the Venom Lord's venoms or the Plague Lord's abscesses.

Still, they weren't her final goal.

She just had to get through them first.

BANG! BANG! BANG!

She pushed her mind to its limits, progressing in her comprehension of Creation with every move.

All natural forces came under her control. Whether they were elements, energies, or even poisons and attributes, she used them to the best of her capabilities to destroy creature after creature.

No matter what the Insect Lord sent, it would be destroyed by her and she would use the chance to get closer to him.

The ant died first, the bee followed next, the moth, the butterfly, the beetles, the fleas...

Everything died, and their deaths made the Insect Lord feel a visceral pain in his soul that absolutely angered him.

But his anger meant nothing.

No matter what he tried, Iris overcame it, and before he knew what was happening, her hand was on his head.

His eyes widened.

He knew what came next.

Iris smiled cruelly.

"Your time has come."

He gritted his teeth.

He refused to accept it.

If he wanted to live...

...he had to use his last result.

A bee appeared from his sleeve and stabbed through his skin, sending electricity coursing through his body. All his senses were advanced upon its death.

A bug appeared in his hand imperceptibly. It had six legs and a thick shell, but it was unmoving and didn't try to attack anything, unlike the rest.

This creature wasn't offensive, but supportive. It wasn't meant to attack his enemy, but to protect him.

As fast as lightning, far faster than he could usually move, he raised his hand to his mouth in a bid to swallow that bug.

But...

Iris grinned.

"Thanks. I was waiting for this."

She was already grabbing his arm, and the bug in his hand was already transferred to hers.

"Purify."

She used a holy mana to cleanse the bug of all the Nox mana imbued in it, and under the Insect Lord's astonished gaze, she directly threw it in her mouth and swallowed it.

That was the last sight he saw.

"Since I got what I wanted, you can go on your way now."

With a mocking remark and a wave of her hand, Iris pushed the Insect Lord's soul into the depths of hell, killing him without a problem.

And as she glanced at the Marionette Lord, who was glaring at her furiously, her smile widened.

'Good. Now I have insurance.'

Chapter 1260 Ambush [11]

The Personal Reality dispelled itself.

"Haa...haa...haa..."

Iris stabilized her breathing and absorbed mana to replenish herself as she slowly made her way towards the Marionette Lord.

"You seem to be enjoying the show from back here," she said, clear on the fact that her words would reach the enemy.

"Hohoho~ it was quite the interesting battle to watch," the Marionette Lord replied.

Their words were not strange anymore.

After watching how Iris grew during her battle, their playful attitude went away.

This enemy who was supposed to be incredibly weakened in the Ancient Battlefield suddenly overcame that boundary with a law they didn't even want to imagine the enemy had.

This wasn't a laughing matter anymore.

No, if they weren't careful, even they would die here.

"I bet you're thinking it would've been nice if you had more backup plans, huh. Unfortunately, you didn't bring a better assassin with you, or else maybe I'd be concerned."

Iris smirked.

She was confident, but not arrogant. She'd scanned the surroundings several times for another attacker hiding and waiting for an opportunity, but there were none.

It wasn't that those people who could avoid her surveillance didn't exist. There was indeed an Assassin Lord, a Darkness Lord, and a few others, but she could guarantee they weren't here.

After all, they were servants of the Karmic Emperor. Of all the others, they were the least likely to join the Marionette Lord and act under their command.

Therefore, Iris could be certain the two of them were alone here.

"Are you underestimating me?" The Marionette Lord said indifferently.

"I would suggest you don't."

"Ah? But you haven't given me a reason to think of you highly, though?"

Iris quipped back without much of a care.

This was the Marionette Lord, after all.

They were definitely terrifying in a war situation, but in single combat...? Iris didn't have any reason to fear them.

Besides their lack of personal ability, Iris was mostly confident they wouldn't have any puppets that could threaten the current her.

"Ha!"

The Marionette Lord scoffed as if her words were a travesty.

"This is a first for me," they continued, their eyes turning colder.

"I must've been too quiet in the past."

The Marionette Lord was the Inhuman Emperor's favorite subordinate for more reasons than one. They were insane, they were versatile, they were more loyal than anyone, and most of all, they were extremely powerful.

Since the universe's strongest were underestimating them, didn't they have to show them why they were feared?

The Marionette Lord didn't entertain conversation any longer.

They made distance and instantly went into action.

The Marionette Lord's main battle strategy was clear. They were a puppet master, as implied by their title.

Of course, for a puppet master, live subjects weren't the only option. The Marionette Lord just enjoyed using them more, because torturing them was a source of great pleasure.

Nevertheless, live subjects only lasted for a short period of time before their minds broke.

The Marionette Lord's main force was corpse puppets. Once the battle started, they didn't just summon a small group like before either.

They saw the previous battle more clearly than anyone. A small number couldn't hold Iris back at all.

Hundreds of corpse puppets appeared between Iris and the Marionette Lord, and without hesitation or any consciousness of their own, they charged as one.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Their attack patterns were strange, and they mostly used physical power since their souls were gone, but their power was severe.

The air exploded and pressurized bursts shot towards Iris from every direction. Whenever they got close, they directly exploded their bodies to cause as much damage as possible.

"Khh...!"

Iris gritted her teeth as she dodged and weaved through the air. She knew the Marionette Lord would be strong, but she didn't expect something like this!

She was being pressured with a strategy similar to what she used against the Plague Lord, and the corpse puppets in the Marionette Lord's arsenal were just as limitless as the golems she could create from the earth.

'Dammit!'

Iris cursed and used her power to push them away. In the first moment, she was already forced to focus on defense.

'What a problem. I could create golems to hold them back if I had a bit of time, but they aren't giving me the chance.'

If Iris switched her strategy to create an army of her own, she'd instantly be barraged by their attacks due to the diminishing strength of her defenses.

So she had no choice but to confront them directly while the Marionette Lord continued to retreat.

'I have to force my way through.'

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

She created small stars on her palms and threw them into the crowd.

Her mana exploded into chaotic bursts of heat and energy that easily tore through the puppets they hit, but the residual energy was absorbed by the surrounding puppets and used to strengthen them.

'The problem is their direct control. If I could remove the Marionette Lord's influence, the battle would become much easier.'

However, to do so, she needed to target the very Demonic Providence that gave the Marionette Lord power.

'There must be a way.'

Demonic Providence, at the end of the day, was another form of energy.

For a puppeteer to control their puppets, they needed strings to move them through.

All she needed to do was find those strings.

BANG! BANG! BANG!

BOOOOOOOM!

The atmosphere became a chaotic mix of forces that tore through any and everything. As time passed and Iris destroyed more corpse puppets, their number didn't decrease at all. Instead, they became more numerous as the Marionette Lord became used to the battle momentum.

Iris was still calm. She was never intending to destroy all the corpse puppets. That would be nothing more than a waste of Divine Energy.

She was looking for a way to get past them, and the more she destroyed, the closer she came to the answer.

It was almost clear.

The ethereal strings that controlled them were almost visible to her. She couldn't cut the ethereal with her power, but she didn't need to.

All she needed was a chance to block the connection.

Divine Energy ran rampant.

'Almost...'

Corpse puppets came from every direction.

'Almost...'

Their synergy was unmatched, making it feel like she was in the belly of a massive beast.

'Almost...'

Her eyes shot in countless directions as if she was seeing all the information in the world. She got closer and closer to it, until eventually, the answer found its way to her mind.

Her mana raged.

The time was right.

"Bind."

With a single command, her mana knew what to do.

Space constricted and a miniature Personal Reality formed. The forces of Creation and Universal Law worked together, and...

...the corpse puppets fell lifeless to the ground, returned to their original state.

Iris bought herself a minute, but that was all the time she needed. By the time they got back up, they'd lose their controller.

She rushed through the falling masses and appeared like a phoenix from the flames, her mana burning with the desire to kill!