

Void 1271

Chapter 1271 Strange Space [1]

Void Sword Art Eighth Form: Collapsing Heavens'

Unlike Damien's usual actions in recent times, this one was extremely big. It was loud, powerful, and left no room for doubt. The entire Ancient Battlefield, and even the Heavens themselves, were forced to acknowledge the power of the one who released that sword energy.

However, at the impact point where he and Immortal Blood Asura stood, it was dead silent.

Time was moving at an infinitely slow pace.

The roaring winds around them were muted as they focused on pushing their strength into each other. Cracks formed on Mirage's beautiful surface as it countered more power than it could actually handle, and instantly upon use, Damien felt his entire right arm shatter.

He was only capable of expunging Divine Energy. Guiding it through his circuits and using it was a completely different matter.

He couldn't handle it, and he knew that, but he took the risk anyway.

Instead of focusing on healing the arm, he forced his mana to keep it steady and healed only his hand so he could maintain his grip on the sword. That was enough for what he wanted to do.

The destructive force was massive enough to pressure Immortal Blood Asura, and as he continued to weigh himself down through various forces, that pressure only increased.

Damien gritted his teeth and endured it. He contained the damage to his arm exclusively as he already chose to sacrifice it.

He rapidly absorbed the wildly expanding Divine Energy from their collision and repurposed it for his own use.

'Collapsing Heavens'

He used it again.

Once again, reality warped to the extreme and weakened Immortal Blood Asura's output. The crevice in the Ancient Battlefield was pushed even deeper than it already was, leaving only a single area of untouched land where Immortal Blood Asura was standing.

"BRAT, HOW DARE YOU?!" Immortal Blood Asura roared.

He understood what exactly Damien did. He clearly saw his own mana being used against him, but he couldn't stop Damien from doing it.

Once he took damage here, he'd lose an incredible amount of face, and more importantly, Damien would gain the single second he needed to escape his range.

If Damien found a way to disarm the bloodhound and escaped to a place Immortal Blood Asura couldn't reach, when would he get a chance like this again?

He couldn't allow that to happen.

No matter what, he had to contain this insolent brat right here and now!

...that's probably what he's thinking!

Damien's eyes were still focused. His side was being torn apart with the second usage of Collapsing Heavens, but he pushed down the pain and continued anyway.

Time was still moving at a crawl. Whether it be their words or actions, they happened so close together that others probably didn't realize there were two separate slashes instead of one powerful one.

That was the goal.

By the time this single second passed...

Damien saw the opportunity.

Immortal Blood Asura withdrew his mana until he was using just enough to repel Damien and started compressing it within his body.

He was preparing for a larger attack.

Damien was still in the air above him with Mirage in full swing, so he was in a position that would only present him with disadvantages. But that was fine.

He was ready to sacrifice more than just an arm to escape. As long as he kept his life, the rest could be dealt with.

Immortal Blood Asura scowled deeply and glared at Damien with a gaze maddened in hatred.

"DIE!"

He gripped down in Mirage with his right hand, shattering the blade, and pushed forward with his left, aiming for Damien's neck.

His mana reached a new quality Damien hadn't seen before. The deep maroon color signified a complex structure of laws that he'd never encountered.

It was a card Immortal Blood Asura never expected to use here, a move called Devil's Hand he'd developed using everything he learned about Blood Laws before he ascended to Divinity.

The number of people who had the right to see the power of this move could be counted on one hand, and all of them would be terrified when they felt it.

However, Damien only saw it as an opening.

'Now!'

He twisted his body impossibly in that single instant.

As the flow of time returned to normal, many things happened at once.

The shattered pieces of Mirage turned into spatial ruptures and devoured Immortal Blood Asura's hand.

This was a special quality Damien personally imbued in the sword. It didn't matter how great the spatial laws of the world were, the translucent material of Mirage would directly become spatial ruptures that latched onto it and forced it to shatter.

Immortal Blood Asura was naturally shocked by this phenomenon, happening on the Ancient Battlefield where space was famous for its solidity, and lost control of his attack.

The mana went rampant and recoiled, but he controlled it as fast as possible to get the most out of the attack.

Damien kicked off the air and twisted his body, pushing past Immortal Blood Asura and directly towards the ground below.

Immortal Blood Asura's claw ripped through Damien's shoulder. And, as the Blood Asura Holy Master took hold of a chunk of Damien's flesh, Damien twisted again and allowed it to rip apart from his body.

Before Immortal Blood Asura could react, Damien hit the ground. His body turned ethereal.

And he vanished into its surface.

WHOOOOOOOOOOSH!

The roaring winds returned. The atmosphere was thrown into spiritual chaos as the forces released in those few instants finally spread through it.

Standing in the middle of it all, Immortal Blood Asura stared at the flesh in his hand blankly.

His gaze went to the ground below.

"Damien...VOID!"

He raged.

The fact that Damien went into the ground made pursuit a hundred times harder.

After all, the ground was completely solid.

Though Damien managed to cleave it, even if Immortal Blood Asura used that crevice to go into its depths and trace him, it would take an extreme level of effort to chase.

Because Damien used a force 99% of Demigods in this place would've been killed by. Even Immortal Blood Asura was missing a hand and had several internal injuries because of it.

"DAMMIT!"

He couldn't give up now.

"BLOODHOUND!"

He called out his most trusted ability. He had more of Damien's flesh now, so following his position on the surface wouldn't be hard. However, the bloodhound didn't move.

Its meaning was clear. Damien wasn't escaping in any other direction. He was going straight down!

Immortal Blood Asura was seething, but there was nothing he could do.

"Very well..."

He calmed his emotions.

Clenching his fist, he absorbed the bloody flesh into his body and used it to create a new hand for his right arm.

"If you wish to hide like a rat, then I shall wait."

He sat down on his position and kept the bloodhound active.

No matter how much time passed or how much mana he wasted, he would keep it active.

He snarled like a wild dog. His usually calm expression was completely gone.

"The moment you come back to the surface..."

He made a vow on his mana, an oath even the Heavens were forced to acknowledge.

"...I WILL SLAUGHTER YOU, DAMIEN VOID!"

Chapter 1272 Strange Space [2]

Damien had become too used to darkness.

This was another case where everything in his surroundings was dark, but unlike every other time, he wasn't in an empty expanse.

This darkness came from the extreme density of material in the surroundings instead of emptiness.

He was currently plunging into the depths of the earth. He'd turned his body ethereal through a variation of One With Dimension and used that illusive property to make this move, but he could clearly feel the consequences that would strike him the second he materialized.

It reminded him of that time with Elitra.

If he misstepped even once, his body would either fuse with the matter around him or explode because it couldn't exist in the same space.

'I have to find shelter.'

It was widely known that there was nothing under the surface of the Ancient Battlefield. After being used for so long, its basic mechanisms weren't stranger to those who fought on it.

However, Damien thought differently.

It wasn't strange for a world to have no subterranean environment. Especially a place like this one without life of its own, it would be stranger if there were pathways under the earth.

But no matter how densely packed the earth was, there had to be pockets.

Damien didn't believe he couldn't find a single underground cave formation anywhere. He also didn't believe the Ancient Battlefield was completely devoid of anything.

'They say this place used to be a piece of the Heavenly World, which means it wasn't naturally formed by the universe to be a stage for Demigod battles.'

Therefore, there had to be something.

Whether it was mineral veins or natural caves, there had to be something.

After all, the Heavenly World was still a world. For a piece of it to rip off, there had to be a cause.

If that cause was a regular dispute over land, something like the Ancient Battlefield wouldn't exist.

If it was a warzone, on the other hand, a warzone where people of untold power fought, not only did the story of this land's formation become more plausible, there were likely to be countless buried treasures from those who died here before and after its separation.

'And those treasures, if they aren't on the surface, have to be in the ground.'

Damien wasn't looking for them out of greed. No, if those treasure deposits existed, they'd be his lifeline.

'The problem is, if this place wasn't compacted by Universal Law and was originally formed like this, it's impossible for anyone other than a spatial practitioner to get down here.'

Either that, or a being with power far greater than a Demigod.

'True Gods...'

Damien wanted to entertain the thought more, but he wasn't in a situation where he could.

'Since I don't feel anything from above, Immortal Blood Asura probably chose not to pursue, but that's not any better for me.'

It only meant the man wasn't actively chasing him. The fact that his position was being recorded didn't change.

'It's worse because I can't stop it. Since the ability comes from his own body, unless I can...'

Damien suddenly had a great idea.

'Good. As long as I find shelter, I'll be able to avoid him.'

The problem was actually doing that.

Luckily, Damien didn't use his own mana for Collapsing Heavens, so he still had a sufficient amount of time to remain in his ethereal state.

With that time, he searched.

He moved down to the deepest layers of the earth and went from there, traveling in every direction in search of even a single pocket.

Since the Ancient Battlefield had shrunk considerably, the amount of space he had to look through was narrowed down, but without being able to teleport, hundreds of millions of kilometers was still a great distance for him.

He didn't have much of a choice but to aimlessly drift from place to place.

The mana stored in the dense earth was enough to revitalize him so he didn't suddenly materialize, but it wasn't enough to completely support him.

His awareness couldn't spread more than a few kilometers while he was maintaining his ethereal state.

At some point, he lost track of his original position and where he was in relation to the surface, but it didn't really matter. Regardless of where he went, the enemy would always be above him.

'This is...more difficult than expected.'

The Ancient Battlefield wasn't like a regular world. It didn't have a system like tectonic plates that altered the terrain. It was built to be the exact same at all times, and even when it healed after the war ended, it would only revert to its previous form through the power of Universal Law.

This was both good and bad. It was good that everything would remain in its place, since it'd be a shame if the treasures were destroyed by tectonic movement, but it was bad that Damien had nothing to work off of while he looked for what he wanted!

He started to lose hope after a while. He started to think there was nothing for him but the death waiting on the surface.

But, while it took an unholy amount of time and happened right as his hope diminished to nothing, he did find it.

A tiny pocket, barely enough to be called a pocket.

'This isn't what I'm looking for, but it's hope.'

It was roughly the size of a rabbit hole in radius, but that didn't matter. Since it existed, others would exist as well!

Damien gained a newfound fervor from that point on.

He stopped caring about time and sustained himself using the surrounding mana, uncaring of the distance he had to cover.

He went in every direction. He went both up and down without missing a single area of space that could've been a possibility.

Until, eventually...

'There it is.'

He was facing it, but it was roughly a kilometer below him.

There, an empty area existed. There didn't seem to be anything inside, but Damien didn't care.

It was a pocket large enough for him to inhabit.

He rushed towards it, bursting into the area like a fish jumping out of water.

It was completely secluded, without any access to oxygen or anything of the sort, but that was fine. Damien was far past the level where such reactions were necessary for him to live.

'Hmm, this is...bigger than I thought?'

Unexpectedly, rather than a small space for him to rest, this place was a large area of its own, more than enough for someone to reside for years on end if they could cope with the isolation.

He leaned against a wall and slid down to a sitting position, taking a few breaths just to feel the sensation of his physical body.

'It may not be the end goal, but I'll rest here for a while.'

Damien closed his eyes.

Sleep wasn't necessary, but right now, it felt like the right thing to do.

He was mentally exhausted. A few moments of rest were the least he deserved.

But, before he could fall unconscious, his eyes shot open.

'What the hell am I doing?'

Rest? Recuperation? Now wasn't the time for that.

Rather, he wasn't even tired. He was ethereal for the past who knows how long, so he didn't feel much fatigue either.

When it came to his mental state, someone like Immortal Blood Asura wasn't enough to inhibit him. After facing the Saint Emperor, Damien's sense of danger had its standards heightened like a woman who'd finally found a good man.

So—

'—why the hell am I tired?'

Either he was wrong and his body really did need oxygen to exist, or...

'...there's something influencing my state.'

It couldn't be the former. If so, Damien would've died 83 billion times in the vacuum of space.

Therefore, only one answer remained.

A grin lit up his face.

'This...this might just be what I've been looking for...?'

Chapter 1273 Strange Space [3]

Damien stood up and looked around.

The cave looked normal and the darkness was regular, not influenced by outside forces. He couldn't see where something could be influencing him, but since he felt it, he didn't doubt the sensation.

'Maybe that'll work.'

He poured mana into his eyes to activate the ability that had been with him since his younger years, one of the only ones he still actively used.

'All-Seeing Eyes.'

As the amethyst color in his irises swirled, the world was presented to him differently, as if he was gazing at reality from an outsider's perspective.

'There seems to be...multiple sources?'

He felt it from all around, from the walls of the cave themselves.

'That's strange. I clearly moved through these parts of the earth while I was searching, so I was certain there was nothing there except rock, but...'

It seemed he was wrong. Whatever it was, it disguised itself as rock and fooled even his senses.

'Then, the only way to find out is to break it apart.'

Damien's eyes were ablaze with energy, completely opposite his previous state.

To find a clue in the most unexpected place, he was more than just a little excited.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Thudding booms rang out as Damien attacked the walls.

They were surprisingly easy to break, especially when Rudimentary Existence Law was in play.

A strange phenomenon, that was the only description Damien could give it.

Even Immortal Blood Asura would need an incredible amount of energy to shatter this rock, but he was doing it so easily?

It was almost as if...

'Even if that's the case, I have to confront it anyway.'

Damien stopped asking questions and tore through the rock like a subterranean being who'd excavated tunnels his entire life.

He followed the energy he saw through the All-Seeing Eyes, but every time he got closer, it distanced itself like it was alive.

But that only made Damien more excited.

A chase with a clear goal was fun. It made him feel like he'd finally be rewarded for his efforts when he found it.

So he tunneled and tunneled.

He ended up almost a million kilometers away from the original cave within a day, but the aura he was following also stopped moving.

BANG!

Damien threw one last punch, and instead of falling to his feet, the crumbled rock fell into the abyss that existed on the other side.

'Here it is.'

Damien grinned.

He was finally here.

He jumped down, falling for almost a kilometer before he landed on flat ground again, and when he did...

"Ha...hahaha..."

He laughed defeatedly.

He'd definitely passed over this place when he was searching in his ethereal state, and he'd definitely found nothing, but here it was.

A room that had substance. A room that had objects inhabiting it.

There were only three, but the quantity didn't matter. If they were truly relics from the Heavenly World, they were bound to be good.

The first was a worn anvil that had clearly been used to forge countless powerful weapons.

It held the experiences of countless blacksmiths, which could be absorbed to boost one's understanding of the art of forging to the level of a master. All one needed to do was use it to receive its gifts.

It was an inanimate elder who would teach an aspiring blacksmith until they reached perfection.

Damien observed it for a bit, but since it wasn't something he could immediately put to use, he threw it in his subspace to check more carefully at a later time.

The second was a flame burning in a mellow fashion atop a pedestal designed specifically for it.

This was the source of the tiredness he felt earlier. Standing in front of it now, Damien found it almost impossible to keep himself awake.

No, it was more than that. His very soul was being incapacitated. If he didn't resist, he'd likely enter an extreme sleep state that he wouldn't be able to extricate himself.

No, that was exactly what would happen.

And that's exactly what kept him awake.

Damien knew what this flame was, and its identity made him too excited to pass out.

He circulated all his power to keep himself awake just so he could keep looking at it.

'6th on the Heavenly Flame Index: the Eternal Dream Flame.'

The Eternal Dream Flame's abilities were far more terrifying than Damien's reaction to their effect suggested.

It had the ability to put anyone struck by it into an eternal slumber. Their souls would be forced into a dream where they were tormented by flames for eternity as well.

'That's not even the best part. The owner of the flame can enter the dream and manipulate it as they please. They can even use the flame to control the enemy's soul and enslave them.'

Damien couldn't stop giggling like a little girl as he put his hand into it.

'Void Flame, you know what to do.'

The black and white flame that hadn't left his body in so long leapt at the opportunity. After flicking its tongues in indignation at Damien's negligence, it rapidly engulfed the Eternal Dream Flame and began its absorption.

'No wonder I haven't seen many other Heavenly Flames in the lower universe. Those near the top of the list must be in the Heavenly World, because the lower universe deemed them too dangerous to house.'

Damien was excited to add another force to his arsenal, but he found it more important to understand the identity of everything here.

Since the anvil from before wasn't complete without a hammer, it was ignored, but Damien already had several plans to use it.

He had to fix Mirage, after all.

The Void Flame was absorbing the Eternal Dream Flame, so Damien didn't have to pay it any attention until the process finished either.

So, he moved onto the third with anticipation.

Of the treasures, this one interested him the most. It was plain and unordinary in every sense, but it seemed to be controlling the Eternal Dream Flame somehow.

It was because of this treasure's influence that Damien was led here in the first place.

Otherwise, with the concealment of this area, he would've never even come close to finding it.

Damien observed it thoroughly, but it didn't look like anything more than a common slate, something that would usually be carried around in some more ancient civilizations for identification.

'Should I...?'

Weighing the consequences against his curiosity, his curiosity won out.

He was at least confident that escaping said consequences would be easier than escaping Immortal Blood Asura, as the slate didn't have any traces of Divine Energy on it.

Since the decision was made, Damien carefully prepared himself to teleport away and turn ethereal.

Once he was finished, he took several steps back and finally poured his mana into the slate.

Divine Energy burst out in surprising quantities, creating a massive whirlpool that filled the entire space with a wondrous display of force, before rapidly subduing itself.

The slate transformed into a uniform crystal that looked like the purest and bluest diamond to ever exist. The mana contained within swirled calmly as it acted on a predetermined will.

Damien's eyes widened.

A hologram made of whiteish-blue light materialized before him.

It was the figure of a man, just a bit taller than him, and though its features weren't completely defined, Damien recognized it instantly.

"Y-you...! What the hell are you doing here?!"

The holographic lifeform gazed at him with a warm smile.

"Since you have made it here, I trust the time has finally come..."

"...son."

Chapter 1274 Final Piece [1]

"Since you have made it here, I trust the time has finally come..."

"...son."

Damien's mind exploded again. It seemed to be a regular occurrence when this man appeared.

Pitch-black hair and blue eyes deeper than any ocean, these features didn't reflect in the hologram unlike the last time they met, but the resemblance to Damien in his appearance and the undeniable link that connected them made his identity more than obvious, even without his words.

Dante Void.

Including his childhood, Damien had only met this man a handful of times, but the complex emotions he held towards him couldn't be ignored.

His father, his absentee father, yet a man who was forced to leave, not one who made a choice.

It was a lie to say Damien didn't have any grievances towards him. Regardless of how much he grew, the lack of a father figure in his life was something he always felt the impact of.

However, he was also a man with more than enough experience under his belt now. He couldn't just base his entire perception of the man on their personal relationship, and he couldn't disregard his struggles.

Besides, he already got rid of most of his negative feelings during their last meeting. The only thing separating them from rekindling their relationship was distance.

...and an opportunity for Damien to beat Dante's ass just once.

Nevertheless, Damien's shock was clear. The chaos of emotions he thought was long gone returned the second this man appeared before him, but he did his best to calm it down as fast as possible. Those emotions didn't control him anymore.

He thought he was ready to speak, but it turned out he wasn't.

He didn't have the capability to call this man "father" yet, but he was past the point of using more disrespectful forms of address, so he was in quite the troublesome position.

"You are likely very confused by my existence, however, it is a shame that I cannot see the look on your face."

Damien's eyes widened.

"Wait, this is..."

"As you must have guessed, this is a mere projection. I have left several methods to contact you in the lower universe over the years, but only a select few have been imbued with my consciousness. This is not one of them."

"Phew..."

Damien sighed in relief. Luckily, he'd be able to avoid the awkward interactions he was expect-

"...though, depending on the situation, my consciousness might descend at any time."

"Keuk...!"

Damien nearly tripped on the air.

'My poor relief...'

"The state of this projection may have changed, but hopefully it is still near the treasures I have left for you. It was difficult to find a way to infiltrate the Planar Battlefield, but I can mostly trust that its laws would keep my possessions safe."

'Planar Battlefield...?'

It must've been the name of the place the Ancient Battlefield separated from.

"Nevertheless, as you have reached the isolated fragment of that place, you must have already reached a level nearing ascension. If so, there is something that must be done."

As Dante's projection continued talking, it became clear that unlike the one in the Celestial Realm that was created for the sole purpose of making contact with him, this one had a more definite reason.

And that reason became clear soon enough.

"There is a seal placed on your body."

Dante's projection raised its arm and pointed forward, somehow pinpointing the direct center of Damien's chest.

"There is a seed in your soul, something I never expected to see in a child born in the lower universe. But, it is clear that the blood of me and your mother flows through your veins."

Damien frowned as he continued listening.

"Space is not your affinity. It is an affinity you inherited from me, but it is not the law closest to you, the law that chose you as its inheritor."

Space...was not his affinity?

This was shocking information beyond any other.

Damien already figured that his spatial talent was inherited from his father, but what did it mean to say it wasn't his affinity?

Space was the thing he was closest to in this world. Despite how many powers and abilities he'd inherited and learned, he never stopped utilizing space and always prioritized it above all else.

For Dante to say it wasn't his affinity...well, it pissed Damien off severely.

Unfortunately, since this was only a projection, there was nothing he could do but listen to its justification.

"When you were born, I and your mother predicted that you would take both of our affinities. We were quite excited to see what a child of Space and Creation could become, as the combination of both affinities could lead to a talent never seen before."

"But we were wrong. Your birth was something neither of us predicted, and the circumstances behind it became so convoluted that they affected your embryo. Your previous affinities were disrupted, and the child that exited the womb was a creature the universe had never seen."

It sounded like an insult, but it really wasn't.

Dante was telling him what he already knew. He was a monster of untold proportions.

However, it didn't seem like Dante was talking about the Void.

The Void would not have chosen Damien because of his circumstances. It was indifferent to such things.

Its decision to house itself inside Damien's body and give him its acknowledgement must've been far more complex than just that.

Then...

...the last affinity!

The last affinity in his status window, which had remained an array of question marks for a very long time, and the second to last mystery along with his strange redacted title.

That was the affinity Dante was referring to.

"By no means was your power something we feared. Rather, regardless of its deviation from our expectations, it meant great things for you, so we had no plans to interfere."

"However...reality begged to differ. When you came out of the womb, not only did the Heavens attempt to strike you down, your body itself began to collapse, unable to handle its power in its infancy."

"The hospital could not explain your condition, and with your mother missing her memories, she was also worried to the point of physical sickness. To save you and your mother, I had no other choice."

"The Heavens..."

In the lower universe, the concept was known as Universal Law, but for even Dante to use the dated term, it must've been a far more esoteric power in the Heavenly World.

Damien heard about the natural disasters that raged through the world on his birthday. He never considered it related to himself, but he did joke about it several times when he was growing up.

He never expected it to be a targeted attack.

'With Earth being disconnected from the wider universe at that time, Universal Law didn't have much power. And if Dante used his power to combat the weakened Universal Law, it makes sense that natural disasters were the end of it!'

If the true Universal Law wanted to strike someone down, it wouldn't end so easily.

No, if that happened and Dante wasn't there, Earth might've been destroyed that day.

Damien continued to internalize Dante's words. He spoke more about the circumstances of his birth, the circumstances of his parents' fall, and all the circumstances that had remained hidden from him until now.

Until finally, he reached the critical topic.

"...and so, I sealed that power in your soul using the essence of Divinity that I had only recently begun to remember. This was also the event that led to my eventual discovery, and the reason I had to leave you behind."

The projection's eyes suddenly became serious.

"You have reached the grand stage. You are no longer the powerless child of the past, therefore, that seal has lost its use. You must have felt it already, haven't you? The power that has leaked with the seal's declining strength..."

"Damien, my son...that power is yours, and I shall not hinder your path any longer."

"That power is the Law of Destruction, and you are the sole inheritor of its will."

Chapter 1275 Final Piece [2]

Destruction.

That was the final piece of the puzzle. It was the only law Damien had left to comprehend before his path to ascension was cleared.

It was the answer he'd been searching the past two years to find, yet...

Here was his father, Dante Void, telling him it had been inside him all along.

Damien...

He didn't know how to feel.

Pieces of the puzzle started to click together, but there was also an empty feeling in his chest that he couldn't explain.

It started back in the 3000 Beast Mountain Range. When his rage reached a point he couldn't contain, a reddish-black energy appeared and decimated everything around him.

After that, the same reddish-black energy appeared several times to aid him, but he'd barely been aware of its presence.

No, it was like it hid its presence from him on purpose.

Those memories of its existence were only returning now that he understood its identity.

It boosted his other laws and acted as if it had its own consciousness, but was that just its way of trying to make itself known from within the seal?

Damien didn't know.

Nor did he know how to feel.

Because he accepted it too easily.

He didn't even have to think about it. If he compared Space to Destruction, while he loved the former, the latter was more deeply connected to his identity.

Wasn't that always his character?

From the First Dungeon to Apeiron, from the Cloud Plane to Nifelheim, all the way through the Divine Realm and the rest of Grand Heavens Boundary, from the day Damien gained power he'd left a trail of destruction in his wake everywhere he went.

That was who he was. He was never ashamed of it, rather, he accepted it wholeheartedly and actually enjoyed this part of his character.

And, there was something more subtle.

Space was his father's path.

He never consciously had the thought, but here he was, realizing it at an age that'd make him a senior citizen at Earth's standards.

He was still living in his father's shadow.

Despite not knowing the man well at all, ever since he first realized that his spatial talent was inherited, he'd been trying his best to escape the shadow of his mysterious father.

He'd been trying to take space in a direction nobody had ever traveled before. He was paving a path that exclusively belonged to him, because that was the only way he could claim this talent his own.

And what was that path?

Naturally, it was Destruction.

It was funny when he thought about it. The amount of subtle influence the concept had on his life was so extreme he felt stupid for not realizing it earlier.

But it made him incredibly happy.

An affinity of his own. Not one that he was granted, but one that belonged to him and him alone.

Wasn't it great?

Even putting aside his emotions, the fact that the final piece of his puzzle of laws was already in his grasp was amazing news.

He could feel it.

The second it was unsealed, he would change.

And that change would propel him to heights he could only dream about in the past.

He stopped reminiscing about the past and started looking towards the future.

Like always, he let go of the "how" and "why." He let go of the concerns that would only hold him back from utilizing his full potential.

And his timing was immaculate.

"...this projection is not the only one in the battlefield fragment. I made sure to leave countless thousands of similar artifacts so I would not miss the opportunity to grant you this freedom."

"As you have encountered one, there is only one thing left to do before I can undo your seal. Collect the remaining slates, and once their power is combined, a portion of my true self can descend. Only with that power will I be able to free you."

"I will not say goodbye, as this is not our last meeting. I will not say good luck, as luck is beneath a man of your caliber. So, until we meet again, my son...I pray you live well, and I pray for your victory in any endeavor you pursue."

The projection smiled softly.

Before Damien's complicated gaze, it turned into particles and returned to the diamond, whose form transformed back into a dull slate.

The leftover mana created a small crystal in its center, which drew a line of mana into the surrounding rock.

'This is another path.'

Damien was clear on what to do next. Dante didn't leave him unequipped for the following task.

To follow this thread and find the next slate, and then continue that pattern until he'd filled the entire slate with crystals and reached its final form...

Damien smiled wryly.

His ability to take in information had become enough for him to not have his brain explode from the knowledge he gained, but he did have another worry.

'I hope all these slates are in the underground. If I have to go back to the surface...'

He shivered just thinking about it, but his heart was beating so fast it was dangerous.

This was his opportunity.

Not just for his future progress, but to take down the enemy waiting for him on the surface, this was his chance.

'Even if I have to risk it all in the process, I'll do so without hesitation.'

Because this time, he wasn't just going to be receiving something.

No, unlike the rest of his journey, which had been carefully guided by the hands of his seniors, this time, he was reclaiming something that had been his own since the beginning.

And that feeling was wondrous.

Damien immediately went to work.

He traveled through the underground vigorously, carving a system of tunnels that connected from one hidden cave to another, excavating as much area as possible as he followed the path of the slates.

His excitement couldn't be underestimated at all. Within just a few months, he'd collected everything he could find in the subterranean area.

And in the process of collecting slates, he also found himself in possession of a variety of treasures.

Among them, the notable ones were another Heavenly Flame, the 8th rank Light Devouring Flame, and several other Elemental Seeds that boosted the power of his Elemental Law to a completely new level.

The rest included the hammer that went with the anvil he found at the start, several heavenly materials and resources, and a collection of techniques and miscellaneous artifacts that would be of great help to his subordinates in the Sanctuary.

Nevertheless, all of those were mere byproducts.

Damien looked down at the slate in his hand.

The majority of its surface was covered in glimmering diamonds that shone in the darkness, but there were still vacancies.

'Five more...'

Five more slates.

If the Ancient Battlefield had shrunk just a little less, he'd have been able to find them in the underground, but at its current size...

'I guess it's unavoidable.'

The mana thread guiding him to the next slate was pointed straight up. He had no choice but to go to the surface.

'But it's only five more.'

Now began a race against time.

Would he find all the slates first, or would Immortal Blood Asura find and kill him before he got the chance?

Frankly, with his life on a tightrope again and the stakes so high...

His eyes were swirling and a wild grin lit up his face.

...he was extremely excited for what was to come.

Chapter 1276 Final Piece [3]

Damien stood in ethereal form several kilometers below the surface looking up.

'He's probably there, right?'

Before he left the subterranean world, he got as close to the target location as possible so he wouldn't need to run needlessly.

However, he still had to make ample preparations before meeting Immortal Blood Asura again.

Since he wasn't in a great rush, he spent several months in the nearest hidden cave practicing with the hammer and anvil and gaining experience as a blacksmith.

It was a great experience for him.

He had to create the forge using his own flames and Creation, including every piece of machinery necessary to fix Mirage, which was his main goal.

He also needed to understand the strange translucent material Mirage was made from, which he could only title Space Crystal without knowledge of its true name, and recreate that from scratch.

After all, Mirage's shards were either used to damage Immortal Blood Asura or lost in the chaos.

The process took a considerable amount of time, but by the end, not only did Damien have a new and improved Mirage, he also had a great understanding of how to properly use Creation Laws for his benefit.

'Alright. Everything is set. The only thing left is to charge out.'

He'd surveyed as much as possible without getting too close to the surface recently, and luckily enough, he seemed to be under a mountain, so he didn't have to worry about an immediate attack.

'Then, without further ado...'

Damien shot upward.

He cruised past ground level for the first time in what felt like years, and rapidly continued upward.

He didn't feel any sort of freeing sensation since the rock of the mountain didn't differ from the underground much besides its lower density, but he didn't care about any of that.

He followed the blue mana thread that was guiding him until he was halfway up the mountain.

His awareness was able to spread now, and the first thing he saw was—

'—fuck, I was wrong.'

BOOOOOOOOOOOM!

The mountain exploded into bits.

"DAMIEN VOID, YOU HAVE FINALLY EMERGED!"

Immortal Blood Asura's manic roars entered Damien's ears again.

But he was no longer panicked.

As he was reintroduced to the air of the world above ground, Damien smiled, swerving through the mana storm with relative ease.

"If someone asked me what I missed the least, it'd probably be your annoying ass voice," he said, well aware that Immortal Blood Asura could hear him.

He tuned out the regular roaring of that man and rapidly surveyed the area, his eyes landing on a slight twinkle amidst the rain of debris.

'There it is.'

Actually, Immortal Blood Asura's attack was quite fortunate. Instead of having to break through the mountain himself, he had a free miner taking care of it for him!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The surrounding explosions were loud and filled with power, but Damien had grown subtly in his time away. With a cool head, he carefully dodged the attacks and made his way to the slate falling through the sky.

'You're mine.'

He snatched it without a problem, and as it turned into a flash of blue light that combined with the main slate studded with diamonds, Damien made his great escape.

"Hey, Impotent Bitch Asura, I'll be leaving, so catch me if you can!"

With a taunt and a grin, he disappeared.

The slate was already pointing to a new location roughly a million miles away.

"DAMIEN VOID!"

Immortal Blood Asura was consumed by madness.

1 year, 4 months, and 16 days. That's how long he waited for Damien to come out of the subterranean world.

Yet, the second he did, instead of granting him the pleasure of dying, Damien continued being the pest he was.

Immortal Blood Asura was naturally furious. Any of Damien's safe returns in the past could be chalked up to luck, but this time was different.

Damien escaped him multiple times since they met on the Ancient Battlefield with skill that Immortal Blood Asura refused to acknowledge.

He wanted to crush the brat that was growing at a pace that scared him, though he refused to admit that part as well, but it was proving far too difficult.

Never was there an enemy who could last this long against him!

His constant success left him prey to his negative emotions far more than others, so when Damien reappeared.

Either he'd die, or Immortal Blood Asura would become a demon. There was no in-between.

Damien also came to understand Immortal Blood Asura's chaotic state after their chase ensued.

He was throwing attacks with much more fervor than before, and he didn't seem to care if they hit or not as long as they carved his presence into Damien's mind.

Moreover, he wasn't conserving mana in the slightest. If Damien hesitated in the slightest, he'd be struck by something other Demigods could only ever use as a final killing move.

'He's strong. Stronger than ever.'

Damien was acting light-heartedly, but he was focused to the extreme. Immortal Blood Asura wasn't someone who could be underestimated.

'To think power like this is present in the lower universe. Then, the Heavenly World...'

He never stopped to think about how strong his enemies were, but it became hard to ignore at times like this.

He was really fighting people of this level.

He was fighting people he could tear down entire worlds with a snap of their fingers!

But Damien didn't let it scare him.

'Hahaha, I'm getting more excited thinking about it.'

He rushed and teleported, moving as fast as he possibly could, until he arrived at another mountain that didn't look much different from its peers.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The sky and earth were filled with dust and debris from the attacks that struck everywhere but Damien's body.

He rushed into the mountain, this time into a cave on its side, and glided across the ground watching the blue mana thread.

Unlike the last slate, this one wasn't hidden at all. It was sitting peacefully in the middle of the cave as if someone had dropped it on their way out.

'Well, who am I to complain?'

Damien grinned as he bent over and picked it up mid-movement. In the same movement, he phased through the cave wall and came out the other side of the mountain.

BOOOOOOOOOOM!

Exactly on time, the mountain peak exploded behind him, giving him quite the backdrop.

Within the falling debris, Immortal Blood Asura's figure was hidden. However, those blood-red eyes glowing like a predator in a frenzied state were still as clear as ever, striking fear into the hearts of any who witnessed them.

But how could Damien be included among them?

He didn't even look back to see it!

His grin widened.

'Two down, three to go!'

It was going smoothly so far.

All he had to do was trust himself.

Because the end was almost nigh.

'The next target is...oh, I didn't expect to be going there so soon.'

'I won't be able to do much but run with my current circumstances, but who knows? I might run into those guys again after so long.'

How would they react when they saw him?

'Haha, it's going to be fun.'

Chapter 1277 Final Piece [4]

The next target was in the center of the Ancient Battlefield, that place that looked like cloudy lily pads drifting in a river of stars.

After following the thread long enough to fill the slate to its current point, Damien was roughly able to understand where it was taking him without directly seeing it.

At least, now that he was on the surface.

He rushed towards it while avoiding everything Immortal Blood Asura threw at him, letting their endless chase continue.

There really was no point.

Immortal Blood Asura could definitely kill Damien if he didn't have a chance to escape, but in the same way, Damien would always be faster than Immortal Blood Asura when he had the ability to run.

Since Immortal Blood Asura was alone, there was no way for him to end this stalemate unless he found a way to either slow Damien down or strike him, but clearly, neither was possible!

'No, I shouldn't get conceited again. Immortal Blood Asura was always working closely with the Karmic Emperor. I have to be wary of him sending help, or even coming personally.'

Damien's eyes became serious as he found himself nearing the central area.

'The thread is...'

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Blood light filled the air, but instead of dodging as he usually did, Damien withdrew his mana and dropped down.

The rushing winds brushed across his face as he slammed down onto the ground and ran.

Every step had the power to leave a dent in the Ancient Battlefield's dense earth, but they were light as a feather, barely making a sound as he moved, let alone an impact.

He rushed and rushed and rushed.

Originally, he thought being on the ground would make it harder for him to escape, but as Immortal Blood Asura's mana carpeted his position, he found that being immersed in the clouds of blood and smoke concealed him far better, and Immortal Blood Asura's aim weakened.

'That tracking ability must not be omnipotent. Unfortunately, even if his sense of my position is vague, these conditions can't be replicated easily, or in a way that he wouldn't immediately notice.'

Damien shrugged it off. Hiding away wasn't in his plans anyway.

He reached the edge of the starry river within a few minutes, and without hesitation, he jumped.

The central area of the Ancient Battlefield was, in reality, a void.

That starry river was a view of the universe itself from the Ancient Battlefield, and if one fell into it, the only fate waiting for them was death from crushing pressure.

Damien wasn't an idiot. He learned about this fact from Iris a long while ago, but what could he do?

This was where the mana thread led him.

"YOU...!"

He heard Immortal Blood Asura's bellow from the depths, but the pursuit and attacks stopped when he jumped.

'He's too scared to follow.'

This was good for him.

Damien used his mana to levitate and looked around.

Everything around him was dark. He was in a void, after all. Above him by just a few feet were the cloudy lily pads, which were actually floating platforms made of marble.

'The slate is...'

He looked towards a certain lily pad and rolled his eyes.

'How annoying.'

Unfortunately, it wasn't giving him anything more than a break. The slate was latched onto the bottom of the marble platform, waiting for him to pluck it.

And pluck it he did.

With three slates under his belt, he rushed back into the Ancient Battlefield and, as expected, Immortal Blood Asura once again chased him endlessly.

It seemed like they'd made multiple loops around the Ancient Battlefield. Danger was all around him, but Damien didn't feel endangered.

He never dropped his wariness, of course, but that didn't change the situation.

He wasn't escaping, but he was certain he'd be able to accomplish his goal before Immortal Blood Asura caught him.

The next slate was a bit more treacherous than the last.

Rather than being in a position in the terrain itself, it was on an individual.

It was a Nox Lord Damien didn't know, and the mana thread directly pointed at his spatial ring.

'Well, it's not surprising. If I saw a random slate sitting in a cave, I'd probably pick it up too.'

Damien grinned.

'Not like this is a problem, though.'

Didn't he have a pursuit helicopter wildly shooting missiles behind him?

It was actually easier to steal the slate from the Nox Lord than it was to take it from the mountain!

The second Damien converged on his position, Immortal Blood Asura's rain of blood light did so as well. The Nox Lord was caught unawares and tried his best to defend, but who would've thought his ally was the one shooting?

His enemy was already behind him, an arm through his chest burning his body and soul with Rudimentary Existence Law.

Damien grabbed the spatial ring off the melting corpse and rushed away. He didn't have to worry about completely killing the Nox Lord since Immortal Blood Asura took care of the job for him.

And it came time for the final one.

This was also in someone's possession, but unexpectedly, the individual was familiar.

'Damn!'

Damien flew over them, bringing the enemy's attacks overhead and giving them a warning about what was to come.

At the same time, he connected to their mind and sent a message.

"Tang Lingzi, can you hear me?!"

Tang Lingzi was in a group of four and had just finished one of many battles in this war.

She and her team were on alert already because of the flyby beforehand, but the voice in her head almost made her think she was hallucinating.

"D-Damien?" She questioned strangely.

"Yeah, there's no time right now! You saw what flew by earlier, right, that was me!"

"You...what are you doing?!"

"As I said, no time to explain. When I give you the signal, take the slate you picked up earlier out of your spatial ring and throw it into the sky!"

"H-huh? What do you— wait, how did you even know I had—"

"No time, remember?! Just throw it when I say to!"

Tang Lingzi gave a sound of affirmation amidst her confusion.

Considering both his tone and the image of what she'd just seen overhead, she relatively understood the situation.

She didn't know what the slate was, but if it could help their universe's biggest hope escape his trying circumstances, she wouldn't hesitate to follow!

Damien sighed in relief as he swerved through the air.

Tang Lingzi was a reliable character, more than most. They also had a deep connection since she was Zara's master.

Damien trusted her to do what she needed to, and so, as he led Immortal Blood Asura on a wild goose chase, he expertly randomized his teleportation so the man wouldn't realize them circling back on their previous path.

Damien saw Tang Lingzi in the distance, and she saw him as well.

However, Damien's eyes widened.

Not even a thousand kilometers behind her was an approaching comet.

No, it was a man in the form of a comet.

'The Karmic Emperor...'

Damien gritted his teeth.

He had to be fast!

"Tang Lingzi, now!"

It all happened in a single second.

Tang Lingzi blindly threw the slate straight up with all her power.

Damien and Immortal Blood Asura arrived at her position.

The Karmic Emperor did too.

Damien stopped, his hand swiping through the air to grab the slate.

From behind him, Immortal Blood Asura saw the opportunity to strike a fatal blow and dug his bloody claw forward, filled with all the Divine Energy he had left.

And from the front, the Karmic Emperor let loose countless dozens of thousands of threads made of his Divine Energy filled with Karmic Laws, his intent to both bind Damien and control him if possible.

The winds roared.

The entire sky was blotted out by the attacks of these two divine beings.

They approached Damien, leaving him no chance to escape.

And...

Damien grabbed the slate.

VOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

The final slate transformed into a pristine diamond and attached itself to the main slate.

That was what Damien had been aiming for this entire time.

But, it was also too late for him to dodge.

As he stood there in the midst of chaos, both attacks reached their target...

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

...and all hell broke loose.

Chapter 1278 Final Piece [5]

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

Two terrifying blows that could rip anyone in the vicinity to shreds exploded on the position of a single man.

However, at the same time, something else happened.

Within the roaring eruptions of power was another sound, almost like the rushing of winds caused by them, but completely different in source.

VOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

The slate in Damien's hand shone with light as its form was completed.

The completely crystalline exterior it now possessed sucked Damien's mana out of his body to sustain itself, and using that mana as a catalyst, it let loose a wave of energy.

A barrier formed around Damien's body. When the attacks first struck, it barely covered him from head to toe, but at some point within those fractions of the second, it expanded past them.

Glimmers of blue light appeared in the storm of red and gold. By the time the Divine Energy dispersed, the barrier was already over ten meters wide, completely isolating Damien from the outside world.

"DAMMIT!" Immortal Blood Asura roared.

"DAMMIT! DAMMIT! DAMMIT!"

BANG! BANG! BANG!

He rushed over to the edge of the barrier and slammed his fists into its surface. He barraged it with as much Divine Energy as he could muster to no avail.

The barrier was too solid.

It was not something a mere Demigod could penetrate.

As Immortal Blood Asura sank into the depths of insanity on one side, the Karmic Emperor carefully observed the barrier from the other.

"Hmm..."

He hummed as he gently traced his hand over it and felt its mana.

'As expected, this is not the work of a lower being. This man, Damien Void...'

The Karmic Emperor didn't have much contact with the man. What he knew was heard through rumors and stories about Damien's escapades, as well as the projections of his battles with the Saint King.

Through these, and especially when Damien appeared on the Ancient Battlefield, the Karmic Emperor clearly understood Damien's worth.

But seeing this phenomenon, he realized he'd underestimated the man.

'A connection with the Heavenly World.'

This was what set Damien apart from any and everyone in the lower universe, and the source of the current conundrum.

'Haa, there is no need to think. The grudge has already been formed and exacerbated. We will be enemies until the end.'

The Karmic Emperor was a pragmatic man. If possible, he would've preferred to befriend Damien and gain access to that connection.

However, their relationship didn't leave room for such thoughts.

'If so, he must be eliminated.'

While they were still in the Ancient Battlefield where outside forces couldn't interfere, Damien had to be killed.

Otherwise, it would be extremely dangerous.

No matter who won, the Karmic Emperor had a means of survival. Damien was the only outlier that could threaten those means.

'The opportunity may not be far away.'

The fluctuations of that barrier were strong. When Damien and Immortal Blood Asura's flashy chase through the battlefield was also taken into account, it was obvious that there were many eyes watching from the distance.

They all had the same thought.

No matter what was happening, it was worth their presence.

And if there happened to be an opportunity...

The Karmic Emperor grinned to himself.

'...they will pounce without hesitation.'

He had a chance to use them.

As he looked towards Immortal Blood Asura, who was in an extremely sorry state already, his grin widened.

The puppet he'd been preparing for so many years was also ready to be tamed.

'Good. I am excited to see what you will do when you leave your protection, Damien Void. Until then, I shall make good use of the gifts you gave me.'

The Karmic Emperor started to move with a purpose, and he wasn't the only one.

Several hundreds of forces were gathering in the vicinity.

The stalemate on the Ancient Battlefield was already at a point where it was on the verge of collapsing, and this had the potential of being the event that shattered it wholly.

No, since the Karmic Emperor already set his sights on it...

...he'd make sure it would.

Within the barrier there was silence.

Damien was completely isolated from the outside world by the opaque blue mana that formed it, and he was alone within the space.

At least, for the first few moments.

Once the barrier was formed, the slate used all its remaining energy to form another diamond, which then expanded into a projection.

But this process was different from the first one.

Unlike the last hologram that didn't have defined features, this one had all of them.

His black hair, his deep blue eyes, his skin and musculature, all of it was clear to see.

This was a true image of Dante Void.

And as it finished formation, a sparkle of intelligence appeared in its eyes.

"Ah...ahh..."

He touched his throat and extended his voice, making sure it worked, before glancing around the area.

"You've gotten yourself into quite the situation, haven't you?" He said with a smile, finally allowing his gaze to land on Damien.

Damien shook his head wryly.

"What can I say? Great geniuses like me just can't seem to get a break."

"Hahahaha!"

Dante laughed happily.

"Indeed, the path of a genius is an arduous one. But, you have been walking it well. To think you'd make it to this point in less than a hundred years..."

He shook his head in disbelief.

"I truly wasn't prepared for it."

He'd set up countless legacies in the lower universe for Damien's growth, and each of them was linked to him.

He would be able to feel if they were entered and he could feel Damien's presence as long as he was nearby.

Yet, besides the Sea God's Realm and Celestial Realm on Death Emperor Star and a few other areas, he didn't see much of Damien.

He didn't expect it at all.

His son was a genius, that was a given considering his bloodline, but he never expected Damien to grow so much without his help.

No, for him to be on the Ancient Battlefield like this, for the Ancient Battlefield to even be of use this early...

"...I really want to hear your story."

He wanted to know what Damien had gone through.

Damien shrugged.

"It's nothing much. I fought a lot, survived a lot, stole a lot, comprehended a lot, and died just a little bit. It's the same for everyone, right?"

He spoke jokingly, but he worded it as such purposefully. Whether it was due to their disconnect or his desire to keep others uninvolved with the more tragic aspects of his life, he didn't want his father to know the amount of pain he'd endured.

Unending isolation, battles that ripped his body to shreds and rebuilt it, war against enemies he was never on the same level as in the first place, and suffering beyond suffering.

No matter how talented he was or how much he'd achieved through the help of others or his own efforts, he'd suffered just as much.

It was the law of equivalent exchange.

"But my experience is beside the point. We can have some proper father-son bonding time once I get up there where you are," Damien said, pounding his fists together.

"Isn't there something more important to do right now?"

Dante nodded wryly.

"I suppose so. Since you are here, it will not be long before our meeting, and even from a brief glance, I understand the kind of trouble you've gathered."

Dante reached his hand out towards Damien, but in his current form, he could neither touch his son nor move to try.

"It will get far more difficult from here. Once I unseal your power of Destruction, its trail will follow you everywhere. Are you prepared?"

Damien grinned confidently.

"Destruction has been following me for a long time already. Instead, I should be asking if you're prepared."

Dante raised his brow.

"Prepared for...?"

"Haha, what do you think? When I get up there, I'm going to beat your ass."

Dante's eyes widened.

"..."

He really...had no words.

Chapter 1279 Final Piece [6]

Dante suddenly realized how prone to destruction his son had become, and through that realization, he also began to understand how hard Damien's life must've been.

People with his tendencies would never live easily. They would always challenge themselves to the extreme for the sake of results, even if they had to suffer immensely to see progress.

And, while they caused immense destruction with their own power, they would face destruction of the same level.

This was the duality of such a law.

It was the complete opposite of the gentle and patient Creation. It was wild, unruly, and unwilling to wait for anyone impeding its path.

'But it must've been such a mentality that propelled him to reach this place!

It couldn't be mentioned enough times.

Dante's shock was incomprehensible to normal people.

Unlike those of the lower universe who could only regard Damien as a monster, Dante lived in the Heavenly World where monsters were everywhere.

Yet, to reach the absolute peak of a lower existence, no, to surpass that peak and fight Divinities as a lower existence...

This was something even the monsters in the Heavenly World couldn't accomplish.

Especially when they were under a hundred years old!

But for now, he had to set his shock aside.

As Damien said, the matter of unsealing Destruction came first.

"Once I lift the seal, the law will attempt to consume you. Every comprehension you should have made in your life will rush in at once, and you must make sure to keep your mind stable through it all. If you collapse from the force, it will all end here."

Damien nodded with a dignified expression.

"If it's mentality, I have no worries. Let's proceed without delay."

Dante sighed.

'I was trying to stall a bit, but it seems to be impossible!

Yes, Damien said they could talk when they met face to face, but...

Dante's current circumstances didn't quite allow such an interaction easily.

He wanted to spend this time with his son, building a connection before their eventual meeting.

But it was fine.

The state of their relationship could only be his fault, and the pain he felt from the distance between them could only be felt by him.

This was his punishment.

Whether or not Damien thought he deserved it, this was something he bore because he couldn't stand his guilt.

'My son might be more mature than me...' he thought wryly.

To him, Damien was still just a baby.

He said he acknowledged him, and he meant it wholly, but he was a parent.

How could he ever consciously make his child suffer?

Knowing what was to come made him hesitate immensely, but if he stunted Damien's growth here, then what?

His actions would only harm Damien in the long run.

"The chick eventually has to leave the nest. Haa..."

He centered his mind and looked into Damien's eyes.

"I will start now!"

He fortified his will, and in that time, Damien did too.

They proceeded immediately.

Divine Energy of a quality Damien had never felt before entered his body. It was gentle in nature, so the Void Physique and Ananta Matrix didn't react as it pierced his body and entered its soul.

Damien tried to trace its trajectory, but after it entered his soul space, it entered a place he'd never seen before and disappeared.

That place was, of course, the small cove in which his laws resided. There, a reddish-black seed existed.

It was now joined by a chromatic seed that alternated between many colors and had a soothing aura, but in its seed state, it could not mingle with it.

Though, the reddish-black lightning arcing along its surface was clearly trying to make the connection it couldn't resist.

Dante's mana entered its territory, and as if it had sentience, it reacted violently.

It remembered the mana that left it in this state.

And it rebelled.

"Khhh...!"

Damien let out a strained breath as his soul felt the impact of its tantrum.

However, before Dante could give him words of encouragement, he bit his lip and internalized the pain.

"Keep going."

Dante nodded powerlessly.

Once again, his son's growth forced him to acknowledge it.

Dante's mana was at a level a mere seed of Destruction couldn't touch. Despite its thrashing, the mana encompassed it and invaded its surface.

It formed patterns of blue on the seed, creating an interconnected geometric pattern that covered it whole.

At that moment, the seed understood as well.

This was its time.

It was not being suppressed, but released!

It stopped resisting and let Dante's mana control it.

Slowly but surely, cracks appeared on the shell.

Until, finally...

CRACK!

It cracked in two halves.

VOOOOOOOOOOM!

A terrifying reddish-black wind rushed out and consumed the shell, finally making its presence known in the world.

Damien's body jerked.

His mind was instantly filled with knowledge as Dante warned.

Every comprehension of Destruction he would've made, starting from the day he learned to shatter space appeared as one, an amalgamated ball of energy that tried to usurp control of his mind.

His body trembled as arcs of reddish-black energy streaked around it.

His internal systems were destroyed instantly.

But it was only part of the process.

Transcendent Regeneration fought back fiercely and kept him alive. His vigorous life force held on to its very last breath, not giving the Destruction a chance to extinguish it.

Damien's body was now far greater than ever.

Perhaps if this happened before he died, he wouldn't succumbed to it, but not anymore.

He stayed stable in mind and body. He took control over his soul, mobilizing Creation to quell Destruction's wildness.

The two forces finally mingled as they were supposed to.

Damien internalized every comprehension in his mind as easily as breathing.

As he'd thought before, he was closer to Destruction than anything else.

He didn't even have to think about its concepts. He didn't have to think about why it worked the way it did. And he didn't have to practice and gain experience with it.

Why would he?

He'd been following the principles of Destruction his entire life.

These concepts were engraved in his very being. This process was just a matter of him understanding their names.

And as his comprehension of Destruction grew, the concept grew closer and closer to Creation.

Damien didn't have to prompt it at all.

Destruction was an element inherently connected to freedom. It refused to be controlled. Therefore, this process was supposed to be a trial where Damien had to tame and subdue it himself.

Yet, contrary to Dante's and even Damien's expectations, the law did not try to harm him.

It acknowledged him, accepted him, and loved his mentality to an extent nobody could have predicted.

Damien was born to be its heir, and funnily enough, he'd already become one with the person born to inherit Creation.

Left to their own devices and ethereally tethered by design, they formed a tether between themselves and merged while Damien took his time comprehending their essence.

The final piece was in place.

All that was left was to tether the combination of their forces, a force that was too great to be named, to the rest.

Damien subconsciously moved to do what he had to.

A thread of Void Mana formed from the center of Samsara, and a thread of Void Mana formed from the center of Elemental.

Together as one, they shot past the bounds of their territories in the same directions stabbing into Creation and Destruction as one. The circuit was finally closed, and...

...the conditions had been met.

Damien had finally reached that point.

He was finally going to stand equal to those on the Ancient Battlefield!

Chapter 1280 Cosmic Rebirth [1]

Mana swirled around Damien's body.

It wasn't his own, but the Ancient Battlefield's ambient mana creating whirlwinds around him as it was stirred by his presence.

Logically speaking, this was the moment he'd been waiting for.

The closing of the circuit in his soul gave him access to Partial Existence Law, which would become true Existence Law once he brought the four forces into one.

This was the condition for him to ascend, however, his circumstances were a bit special.

By all means, if he was in the lower universe, his Cosmic Rebirth would have already begun.

However, this was an unprecedented situation where someone was ascending to Divinity in the Ancient Battlefield.

This place was mostly absent of the lower universe's Universal Law, leaving it with barely enough power to sustain a Universe Baptism, let alone a Cosmic Rebirth.

Damien gritted his teeth as he realized it.

'I can't let it end here.'

The future was uncertain, and the power of Partial Existence Law wasn't enough to defeat someone like the Soul Emperor, let alone the Saint Emperor.

'I need Divinity.'

That was the stage he needed. A comprehensive increase in his league, a completely new playing field.

'I have no choice. I'll support it on my own.'

His own mana roared as it was freed from his body. Using his own comprehension of Universal Law, he tried to form the environment necessary for Cosmic Rebirth to succeed.

Unfortunately, it wasn't nearly enough.

"Son..."

Dante's voice rang out, bringing Damien's attention back to reality.

He watched as Dante's existence faded away. He had a sad smile on his face as he left, almost melancholic.

"I cannot help you with what is to come, but I can at least support you for a period."

"You...what...?!"

Damien's eyes widened.

As he'd grown far more sensitive to reality after closing his circuit, he sensed exactly what Dante was doing.

The piece of his soul that descended in order to unseal Destruction, he was sacrificing that fragment to summon something.

"It will not last long, but it will start the process. I shall leave the rest...to you and the connections you've formed in this life."

VOOOOOOOOOM!

As Dante's soul fragment collapsed, the heavens thundered.

A massive storm appeared, but instead of dark, ominous clouds, those above were a saintly white, pristine as if they were carved from the purest jade.

The lightning coursing through them was equally majestic, a mixture of silver and gold that Damien had never seen before.

He felt the pressure of that entity. It was far beyond anything he knew, the most complete representation of "Law" he'd ever witnessed.

And it bore down on him with all its strength, as if it were a pair of cold eyes judging his worthiness.

"This is the Heavenly Order, or, in your terms, the Universal Law of the Heavenly World. It shall aid you in completing Cosmic Rebirth."

Dante reached his hand out one more time, trying to touch the face of his son to no avail.

His state was already known, and the second the Heavenly Order appeared, Damien's consciousness began to fade into a different realm as well, making him unable to move his body.

"I wish you well. I look forward to our next meeting, and, I promise. While I understand your feelings, you will not be able to touch a hair on my head."

Damien did his utmost and finally managed to crack a single eye open, straining himself further to grin.

"Thank...you...d— I'll see you...soon."

He couldn't say that word yet, but Dante wasn't offended.

Just the fact that it was sitting at the tip of his tongue was enough.

Dante smiled one last time, wiping the sorrow off his face.

"Son, I am proud of you. Always remember that."

As his body turned into particles that drifted into the Heavenly Order, tears attempted to form in Damien's eyes.

But he shut them down.

'A father, huh...'

He hadn't experienced the feeling much, but it wasn't bad.

It wasn't bad at all.

And if he wanted to properly regain the key relationship that had been missing from his life...

'...I have to break past this boundary.'

His mind was ready, as was his body, and as was his soul.

The time to elevate his existence had come.

But...unknown to Damien, the Heavenly Order could only sustain itself for so long.

Perhaps it could initiate his Cosmic Rebirth, but whether or not it could support it in full was still a question.

Naturally, there was a solution to this problem, but to understand it, one had to look at the outside world.

Whether it was Universe Baptism or Cosmic Rebirth, the processes were similar, and the appearances were somewhat mirrored as well.

Just like during Damien's Baptism, a massive wall of law formed around him. This wasn't a protection mechanism, but a natural instance formed by the sheer weight of the Heavenly Order's influence.

With the fading of Dante's barrier and the sacrifice of his soul fragment, the law pressure exerted itself on the world, and immediately, it was noticed by almost every Demigod on the Ancient Battlefield.

All of them had been through Cosmic Rebirth before, but none of them were able to judge this phenomenon as the same thing.

After all, this was their first encounter with the Heavenly Order.

Therefore, a variety of conclusions were formed. Some thought it truly was a Cosmic Rebirth, while others believed some sort of heavenly treasure was forming.

Regardless of their reason, Divinities began to congregate on Damien's position.

Just like his Universe Baptism, Damien was undergoing Cosmic Rebirth in the middle of a war zone.

But unlike that time, it wasn't so cluttered.

At that time, armies charged from all sides. The total number of enemies and allies was in the tens or even hundreds of millions, creating a scene that blotted out the earth.

However, there weren't nearly as many Demigods in the Ancient Battlefield, and of them, not many were willing to risk themselves going somewhere that would obviously become a frenzied slaughterfest.

Therefore, roughly 4,000 were involved in the battle that was soon to start.

On the Nox side, it was mainly the Karmic Emperor's forces, traitors like Immortal Blood Asura, and some from the Soul Emperor and Inhuman Emperor's factions.

Meanwhile, the Grand Heavens Boundary side was less scattered.

After all, Tang Lingzi was there to see everything that happened.

She called Alucard and their forces, who'd grown heavily in number since the beginning of the war, and explained the reality of the situation to them.

The 1500 of them present were here to protect their future, the hope that would bring them to victory.

This was half of the total forces Grand Heavens Boundary possessed.

They would have brought more. Surprisingly, the most stubborn of Demigods were also willing to lay their lives down to protect Damien.

Because even those who were selfish understood the value of forming a positive relationship with him and promoting his growth.

What would it look like when someone who could kill Demigods as a lower existence ascended to their level?

It was obvious that being on his bad side was an absolute sin.

Nevertheless, just like last time, Damien became the central point of the war.

And as the two sides faced each other, one protecting the barrier of law and the other intent on penetrating it, the winds stilled.

Even the Ancient Battlefield itself had to quiet down.

Because the coming collision was of a scale that had not been seen since the start of the war.