

Void 1291

Chapter 1291 Emergence [2]

It was nonsensical.

Once Eyrrisea Luminus took her place on the battlefield, it became utterly incomprehensible.

This wasn't the outcome that should have occurred.

Grand Heavens Boundary should not have stood a chance against the Nox.

Their Demigods were stronger, they had greater numbers, and they had Emperors who couldn't be stood up to no matter how many weaker Demigods teamed up against them.

So why?

Eyrrisea Luminus was terrifying now. She used to be a weakling disguised as a powerhouse, but that was no longer the case.

The second she made her advent, tens and hundreds of Demigods met their ends. Her laws were flamboyant, seemingly just for show, but they held an absolute power none could stand up to.

If one assumed they had an attribute advantage, she'd rid them of it by using their weakness instead. If one thought they could overpower her with raw strength, she'd show them what true strength was. If one tried to find her tactical weakness, they'd come to learn she had none.

She'd been missing from the battlefield for years. Most assumed she'd died, while others assumed she was crippled or had fled, but none predicted this outcome.

None expected her to become what she was now!

'I...'

Immortal Blood Asura gritted his teeth in indignance.

As if Tiamat, the Death Empress, wasn't enough, a new monster like her showed up as well.

He no longer had a chance to survive on this battlefield.

Currently, he was relatively far away. He'd been thrown like a rag doll by the Death Empress as she fought the Karmic Emperor, and when he acted against his base instincts, he realized that the man he'd been working with for so long had tried to use him.

The Nox were not his allies. He always knew this. Yet, he never expected he'd be weak enough to be controlled by them.

He lost his rationality.

As he looked over the battlefield, as he gazed at the barrier of law beyond it, his rage boiled up again.

Yet, he forcefully pushed it down.

'Survival. I must survive.'

He had to retreat. He had to rid himself of the Karmic Emperor's influence before he returned, even if it meant allowing his mortal enemy to grow.

He had to grow within that period, so he wouldn't be pushed down when the time to fight came.

He turned his back, humiliation and rage filling every ounce of his being.

His Divinity was simple.

He wanted to dominate and conquer. He wanted to be the final winner in every battle he was part of. He wanted to stand above all others and step on their hopes and dreams.

He stayed in the lower universe for this purpose. He had no interest in the ongoing wars, but if he was on the winning side, his Divinity would feel the enhancement that his victory brought.

However...

'How did this happen?'

He had no choice but to question it.

This war had a set outcome from the start. Even if nobody betrayed the universe, they still did not have the power to stand against the Nox.

Immortal Blood Asura realized this clearly through the senses he'd honed for thousands of years, and thus, he betrayed his homeland for his selfish desires.

Yet...

What changed?

Why did such an impossible outcome become possible?

No matter how much he didn't want to admit it, there was only one outlier in every situation.

"Damien Void..."

That man was the problem.

Somehow, he, as an individual, managed to influence a war on the scale of countless universes.

Wasn't it unbelievable?

It was so unbelievable that he was still thinking about it, unable to swallow the truth.

The man who had become his mortal enemy, the man who's been targeting his Blood Asura Holy Land and has been their target for decades now...

That man was the side he should have chosen.

"DAMMIT!"

He flared his aura in rage.

In the end, that was also an impossible thing. He would have never chosen Damien's side even if their relationship was amiable from the start.

Was he fated to die?

How could it be?!

He, Immortal Blood Asura, was just a cog in the machine, just another fodder used to motivate that man?!

"I REFUSE!"

Madness overtook him again.

The Karmic Emperor's subtle influence corrupted his soul, giving his emotions fuel to burn brighter.

His brain told him to retreat and secretly grow his power.

But he could not ignore his heart.

He could not take a step away from the battlefield no matter how much he wanted to.

Slowly, robotically as if he was doing his best to resist, he turned back around to face it.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Eyrrisea Luminus was in the sky with a massive array of weapons around her. They rained down hell onto the earth, however, through precise control, their every attack missed her allies while perfectly striking her enemies.

Nox Lords fell by the tens. The numbers accumulated until over a hundred died every second.

There were only 2,000 of them left as a whole. Their numbers were brought down to match the universe's forces solely due to her interference.

'No, that one is even more terrifying.'

The woman named Tiamat.

He was no match for her.

Because she was toying with the Karmic Emperor, he could neither retreat nor spare effort to influence the battlefield.

The Nox Lords were fighting on their own. Yes, they had intelligence befitting of their positions, but, the majority of them didn't have true wisdom and only instinct that could lead them to victory in battle.

The absolute concentration of power that the Nox utilized.

'So this is the consequence of that.'

Why didn't he realize it before?

Such a flawed system, such a flawed race...

Perhaps, even without someone like Damien, they would have met a pitiful end.

'Or...'

His thoughts shifted again, a product of his denial.

He stopped admonishing the Nox. Instead, his hatred gathered on one man.

'Perhaps I allied with the wrong man.'

Perhaps the Karmic Emperor was the problem.

If so, there was still a chance.

'The Soul Emperor or the Saint Emperor...I must find them as soon as possible.'

Or so he thought.

Yet, his feet would not budge.

No, rather, they would not follow his command.

He took one step, then another. He started walking, then running full speed back into the heat of battle.

He could not resist.

And at some point, he just stopped resisting.

'If I have no choice, then I will at least exert my will in some way.'

Until he could free himself of this control, he would make his will known to the world.

He would not let himself be slandered by the masses!

Immortal Blood Asura flared his mana and allowed it to wildly scatter through the surroundings.

The sheer weight of his breath crushed several weak Demigods.

He watched as some ran away, some knelt in submission, and some others charged at him to take him down.

And out of the corner of his eye...

He saw that scene.

Everything he was trying to suppress burst forth again.

Everything he tried to do was for naught.

Because the chase of his lunacy appeared.

The barrier of law started to dissipate, and the shadow of a man slowly revealed itself from within.

"..."

Immortal Blood Asura's body went aflame as he roared.

"DAMIEN VOID!"

Chapter 1292 Emergence [3]

"Phew...it's almost over, huh?"

Damien finally came to his senses.

He couldn't quantify the time he spent in the sea of his Divinity, but he didn't really care. It was enough time for him to properly gain a grasp on the changes that occurred, and since that time didn't reflect in the real world, it didn't really matter much.

What was more important was the Divinity itself.

'What do I even call this?'

Damien was definitely confused. It had form, but it was formless. It imitated the Void, yet, the Void had no place in it.

It was a confusing Divinity that reflected "Damien Void" more than any law or concept.

'Which means, while I can't really compare it to other Divinities, it is in its absolute best state.'

He didn't need a Divinity based on law. His laws would be changing and evolving too often for such a Divinity to have any real worth.

He needed a Divinity built on Legends, one that would grow by Legend and wouldn't impede or be impeded by his growth in laws.

'Though, it's not like there's nothing there.'

Because of the nature of Divinity, laws had to be included, so there were a myriad of them present.

And...

Strangely, something he didn't expect at all.

'Senior Azure Dragon...'

Back on Beast Emperor Star, Damien had an encounter with a Godbeast ancestor who should've been long forgotten with time.

That ancient being gave him many things, including sealed knowledge, a strange trait, and an egg that was still resting in the Sanctuary, unhatched.

Frankly, the memories didn't affect him anymore.

They were unsealed during his ascension, but what he found were just reiterations of knowledge he already had. It was clear that nobody expected him to grow as he had.

But the "Azure" trait...that was different.

He didn't know exactly how it worked, but it had rooted itself in his Divinity. It had taken root in his body as well, melding into his flesh and bones as the lightning baptism took place.

'The immortal body is the Void Physique's doing, but that didn't change my actual defensive capability much. It just made sure I wouldn't die when I died. However, Azure is different. Because of it, I feel like my body has become truly indestructible.'

Of course, that feeling was bloated. There was no way for a newly ascended Demigod to have a truly indestructible body, but it was true that his physical strength and defense reached unprecedented levels.

As for the "thing" in his soul...

'I still have a ways to go before I understand what that is. Either that, or there's still a trigger that's missing.'

Whatever it was, it didn't affect the current him.

Damien looked into the sky.

"It's time for you to go, huh..."

The Heavenly Order was already dispersing, leaving the Ancient Battlefield as soon as possible now that its job was done.

Even though that was an entity without sentience, Damien respectfully bowed to it in thanks.

Because of it, he was able to achieve impossible results. Universal Law would not have given him nearly the same effect as those strange energy waves the Heavenly Order sent out.

Those energy waves supported the setting of the Void Physique and his timeless drifting in the sea of Divinity, allowing him to make the most of this opportunity.

But, it was truly odd.

Unlike his Universe Baptism, where it felt like the entire world changed, his Cosmic Rebirth was both quick and relatively effortless.

'Haha...'

He didn't want to be arrogant, but it was hard. If it wasn't for him already achieving the qualities of Divinity beforehand, how could it have been so easy?

There was no way to deny it.

Damien Void was a Demigod.

No, he'd be a Demigod the second he stepped out of this place.

'I was expecting things to reach a breaking point before I got out, but it looks like I still have time.'

It was a strange feeling.

Such a big event was just another milestone?

In hindsight, he should've expected it. He was stronger than most Divinities even before Cosmic Rebirth, and his mentality had been saturated for decades already.

'Maybe this is the benefit of being an earthling. Since my sense of time is still rooted in mortality, I matured much faster as well.'

He didn't want to wait hundreds or thousands of years to become who he wanted to be.

He wanted to reach that place as quickly and stably as possible.

And that was what he achieved.

Cosmic Rebirth really was nothing more than a small stepping stone for him.

'I do miss the effect Baptism had, though. It was fun growing so much.'

In a sense, he'd reached a limit. He'd reached a peak already.

As long as he remained in the lower universe, there wasn't much farther he could grow.

'Speaking of...'

He thought he'd feel a call once his Rebirth ended, but he was wrong. There was no call for ascension at all, as if the Heavenly World didn't want to accept him.

'The Ancient Battlefield really is a forsaken place. I guess I'll feel the call once I go back to the lower universe, but...'

He still had much to do before ascending, so he had to make plans for when that day came.

'Before that, though, let's make the impact I was missing.'

Damien looked through the barrier of law. It was quietly dispersing, and his power made it practically irrelevant to the current him.

Partial Existence Law and Divinity...

He closed his eyes and felt it.

He felt the weight of his existence, the absolute bliss of ascending from a lower existence to a higher existence.

The fact that he was here meant he'd finally stepped on the path.

He finally made it to the starting point.

And...

"Ahh, fuck. Who am I acting all calm for? I'm so fucking excited I can barely stand it!"

His heart was beating so fast that he thought even his current defense couldn't stop it from bursting out of his chest.

His mind was impatient, so impatient that he felt jittery.

The power at his fingertips...

He wanted to use this power!

VOOOOOOOOM!

The barrier of law finally started to come down.

And instantly, a massive wave of killing intent washed over him.

"DAMIEN VOID!"

Damien grinned.

"Haha, as expected, I can always count on him."

The practice dummy that had been waiting for him to finish for the past few hours, that man who he hated to his very core...

Immortal Blood Asura was right outside the barrier, practically foaming at the mouth for the opportunity to slaughter his prey.

But...

"Why do you look so weak?"

Damien smiled happily.

"Well, it doesn't matter. All the shit you've pulled for the past, what, 30 fucking years...? Yeah, I'm going to make you feel all that pain with your body, so be prepared."

Immortal Blood Asura could be considered lucky.

Damien's body appeared as a shadow to the outside world right now, and his words couldn't be heard.

Or else, perhaps Immortal Blood Asura would have died before he even had a chance to fight him! M

Nevertheless, the moment finally came.

Damien Void was returning to the battlefield.

Those who'd made themselves his enemy, those who'd stood in his way, all those with wickedness corrupting their actions...

It was time to make them all pay!

Chapter 1293 Emergence [4]

The world went silent.

In the first place, the battle began because of that.

The Heavenly Order and the barrier of law gave off such wondrous fluctuations that the Nox Lords gathered here for a chance to get their hands on whatever was inside.

And the Grand Heavens Boundary side, who understood what was happening, came for the sake of protecting that man until his Cosmic Rebirth ended.

The barrier of law never got involved in their struggle, because no matter how many of them died because of their inherent weakness, they kept this goal in mind.

They did not let a single Nox approach that barrier, including the Karmic Emperor, strongest of them all.

Now that it was coming down, its magical fluctuations dispersing as if they never existed...

The Nox were finally going to find out what they were fighting for.

And the allied forces were finally going to find out whether that man was worth protecting.

In this silent world, an opaque yet transparent barrier came down from the heavens to the earth, slowly revealing the scene inside.

There stood a single figure, tiny in comparison to the barrier, yet with a presence far surpassing it.

His hair was long and black, flowing a quarter of the way down his back like an abyssal waterfall, devouring the light around it. His face was chiseled as if it had been sculpted by the Heavens themselves, and his body was worthy of being called nothing less than the perfect male physique.

He wore robes like a scholar, black in color, and brushing lightly with the wind around him. A serene appearance, like a starry night sky, unbothered by any and all things.

And...

He was vague.

They could all sense these things inherently. They could picture what he looked like in their minds. Yet, their perception could not see him at all. In their eyes, he was nothing more than a shadow.

A shadow with deep, amethyst purple eyes that tightly grasped the souls of those who dared look into them.

He was Damien Void.

He was the Hegemon of Law, the man who stood equal to the Heavens, the God Killer, and the bane of all things.

And finally, he graced the Ancient Battlefield with his divine presence.

"DAMIEN VOID!"

A sacrifice was already in place for him.

Immortal Blood Asura ignored everything. He didn't care about Damien's aura nor his pressure, he shot forward with his claws outstretched with the only thought in his mind being the death of that man.

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

Bloody red Divine Energy wildly whipped through the atmosphere, crushing the air itself as it destroyed everything in its vicinity.

Even the Demigods standing hundreds of kilometers away could feel the terrifying aura of that attack, and subconsciously backed away despite being out of its range.

Everyone continued to watch in silence.

An attack like that...

Even if he was a Divinity, that man had to have died.

It was a shame.

After all, he'd just ascended. Moreover, he was meant to be the universe's hope.

A collective sigh spread through the Grand Heavens Boundary side as they watched Damien die at the hands of one of their own.

But before their morale could drop...

"T-there's something...!"

Somebody yelled out.

As the energy cleared away, the eyes of the crowd turned as wide as saucers.

"Immortal Blood Asura, it's been a while. Did you miss me?"

Damien stood unharmed with the claw in his grasp, a thin veil of energy covering his body.

"YOU...!"

Immortal Blood Asura roared again, but Damien wasn't planning on listening to his nonsense.

No, he wanted to try this new energy in his body, the strange force his mana had transmuted into as he ascended.

It was not Divine Energy, but for the sake of familiarity, until he could use the energy in its base form, he cloaked it as such.

Within a fraction of an instant, his fist was already making contact with Immortal Blood Asura's chest.

BOOOOOOM!

"Kahak...!"

Immortal Blood Asura spat out mouthfuls of blood as his body shot back.

Damien raised his hand without leaving his position.

"Move."

Divine Energy pulsed from his body, and, as if his command was inviolable, reality itself moved.

The earth shot up like a sentient being and chased Immortal Blood Asura, slamming into his flying body over and over again, disallowing him from regaining his balance.

The skies became material and exuded extreme pressure that limited his movement speed, the dark clouds turned solid and barraged him from above with icicles made of metal, and even the atmosphere twisted around him, choking him and moving all the surrounding Divine Energy away from him.

Immortal Blood Asura did his best to fight back. He used the mana within him since the ambient mana was avoiding him, he attacked the skies and the earth to get away from them, however...

How could he face reality itself?

"Silence."

Damien's voice rang out again.

Immortal Blood Asura's eyes widened.

His mana was...disobeying him?

With a single word from Damien, it retreated back into his body and hid itself away as if it were a rabbit facing a terrifying beast.

He was left with only physical protection and power.

"DAMMIT!"

He yelled indignantly.

He punched out, crushing the waves of earth that tried to bring him down.

He punched out, shattering the metallic clouds that barraged him.

He punched out, trying to shatter the sky itself for betraying him.

However, that was the limit of his power.

Without Divine Energy, he was nothing.

"How pathetic."

Damien's words were devoid of emotion.

To think this was the man who pushed him so far in the past.

To think a mere bug like this ever dared to make him suffer!

'No, he is just a stepping stone. My true enemy is...not someone who can be dealt with so easily.'

Damien shook his head.

Looking at Immortal Blood Asura now, he understood his position in the lower universe.

He was indomitable.

That man who could do nothing but flail around in desperation and denial used to be the strongest.

But no more.

"Just die."

The forces of Life and Death followed the orders of their Absolute.

Life rapidly left Immortal Blood Asura's body, returning to Damien's grasp, while Death took its place, wilting his body and soul into husks.

"Immortal Blood Asura, do you regret it?" Damien asked.

That man, at the end of his rope, gritted his teeth with blood leaking from the side of his mouth, his eyes as fierce as ever.

In these few seconds, he'd been humiliated, trampled, and left in the sorriest of states, however, he refused to fold on his beliefs.

That was the last remaining pride he had.

He could not talk, but his stance was as clear as day.

"Understood."

There was no need for more words.

Damien pushed his palm down, and the inescapable force of Spacetime crushed down on Immortal Blood Asura, splattering his body into chunks of flesh and bones.

'Devour'

Damien no longer needed to be near the target.

The world itself leaked the energy of the Void, devouring Immortal Blood Asura's lonesome soul into its depths.

And Damien...

Damien gained his "everything."

His memories, his laws, his bloodlines, his strength, and most importantly...

'His Legends have been absorbed into mine.'

This was the newly reborn appearance of Devour.

If one looked at Damien's status window, they'd understand it all.

[Devour Level Max]

It reached its full potential, and Damien became a man who could take any and everything his enemies ever created or gained.

He was the budding ruler of reality itself.

Nothing was beyond his grasp.

He looked down at the battlefield, uncaring of the death of his great foe, and smiled.

"If it took that much to kill him..."

...then these people required no effort at all.

Damien's palm pushed forward once more.

"All of you..."

As if he carried the weight of the world in his every word, the people below, whether denizen or Nox, held their breaths and watched, unable to interfere in his divine judgement.

"...cease existing."

There was no sound.

There was no emission of mana.

There was no presence whatsoever.

At once, within a single instant, without a word of opposition...

...every Nox Lord in the vicinity vanished from existence.

Their memories, their Demonic Providences, their bloodlines, their strength, and most importantly, their Legends all became his.

He was Damien Void.

In times of comfort, he was warm, caring, charismatic, relaxed, and unrestrained.

However, on the battlefield, he was absolute.

This was his path.

This was the path of a Hegemon.

Chapter 1294 Hunt [1]

The Karmic Emperor's eyes were wide with pure shock.

Luckily for him, Tiamat stopped her attack to watch Damien, otherwise, he would've died right then and there.

Nevertheless, when Damien easily killed Immortal Blood Asura and wiped out all the Lords in the vicinity, he was naturally in a state of disbelief.

No matter how talented he was, he had just ascended, right? This kind of strength should've been impossible, right?

These kinds of thoughts rushed through his head and created chaotic waves that completely crushed every plan he had made since the start of this war.

So naturally, when Damien suddenly appeared next to Tiamat, those cold eyes gazing down at him like he was some lowly being, he froze up.

"Need help?" Damien said casually.

"No need. I am enough for this one," Tiamat responded in kind.

"Hmm, alright. I was going to go on an Emperor-hunting spree, but I guess you have your own grudges too. How about we split them two and two?"

"That depends on which two you want."

"My main target is really only the Saint Emperor, but if I had to choose between the others, the obvious choice would be the Soul Emperor..."

"I cannot allow that."

Damien's brow raised in surprise at her quick response.

"Is there any particular reason?"

Tiamat nodded.

"This one is too weak. I will not take the other weak one as well."

"Is that really the only reason?"

"..."

Damien shrugged.

"If you don't want to talk about it then don't. I'll take the Inhuman Emperor if that's what you want..."

"...however, the Saint Emperor is mine no matter what."

"You..."

Damien's eyes shot to the side as he glanced at Tiamat.

In that moment, she froze just like the Karmic Emperor.

Damien was strong. His gaze alone put more pressure on her than any of the Demigods she'd faced before.

Whether or not she could face him was still a question, but...

As he disappeared without leaving any room for debate, Tiamat had a thought.

'So even you can make that kind of expression...'

The Damien who marked the Saint Emperor was not the one she knew.

That was a beast. A ruthless killing machine that would stop at nothing to achieve his goals.

The Saint Emperor was the longest-living being in the lower universe aside from the Ancient Sovereign. Naturally, he played a large role in Tiamat's life as well, one that absolutely made her want to tear him to pieces.

However, she understood this feeling well.

If she tried to steal his prey...

'...I may not live to see tomorrow.'

She shook her head and cleared her thoughts.

Regardless, the Soul Emperor was the main target for her revenge, and since the rest were already dead or lost in time, there was no point getting too worked up over it.

She would be satisfied as long as she saw that man suffer, so even if he died at Damien's hands, there was no difference.

Instead, she looked at it in a positive light.

A man who could be so warm that he melted her icy heart yet so ruthless he could instill fear into her, if there was any man worth dedicating her life to, it would be him.

She didn't know where he was going or what he would do, but until the time came for them to meet again, she was given free rein as long as she didn't cross his line.

Therefore...

She turned her gaze back to the Karmic Emperor, who was covertly letting out a sigh of relief now that the storm known as Damien Void had passed.

"Did you think we were finished?"

The Karmic Emperor flinched.

"..."

He opened his mouth as if he were going to speak.

And he was gone in the next second.

BOOM!

The atmosphere cried out as he shot away at his maximum speed.

'I have to escape that crazy woman, and I have to escape that nonsensical man! Dammit, why must fate toy with me like so?!

For so many variables to appear at once, and for each and every one to be capable of toppling the entire board with their own strength, did he accumulate some sort of bad karma?!

No, he did exactly that, but he was supposed to be the one person free from its negative effects. That karma was supposed to be the source of his strength.

Good karma could be harvested from those he controlled, but it could only be used to strengthen those he controlled. Bad karma on the other hand could not only be used as an attack force, but also as a means to strengthen himself.

So why was he being struck by so many consequences at once?!

"I can hear the gears in your brain turning from over here."

He thought he was escaping, but he was wrong.

He was nowhere near escaping her grasp.

Tiamat trailed behind him at a reasonable distance and allowed him to run, not because she wanted to play with her food again, but because she needed to make distance from those Grand Heavens Boundary Demigods in order to properly fight.

"Prepare yourself. This time, I will not let you off so easily."

Tiamat didn't know the Karmic Emperor. He was a relatively new Nox Emperor, and didn't exist during her time.

However, his twisted snake-like personality and cowardice, even his Demonic Providence, reminded her of a certain disgusting individual from the past.

"You may not be him, but that is not my problem. Do not blame me for what is to come, blame him, for he is the reason you will suffer."

Tiamat finished her speech, and in the same instant, she appeared next to the Karmic Emperor.

"No..."

His words were meaningless.

Waves of horrifying black Divine Energy billowed from Tiamat's body, sinking him into the depths of darkness.

"No...no...NO...!"

From all sides, creatures of unknown origin, those he'd killed in the past, and his own inner demons surrounded him, swallowing him deeper into the abyss.

He had no power here. They tore apart his skin, ripped out his nails, gouged his eyeballs, severed his limbs, and made him experience every form of unimaginable pain in existence.

It was all an illusion.

His mind was being broken with every second, and as the effects started to manifest on his body and soul, his pain was worsened to an extreme degree.

"LET ME OUT!"

"LET ME OUT! LET ME OUT! LET ME OUT!"

In fact, the Karmic Emperor wasn't a man with remorse. The guilt of his actions, the morality of it all didn't affect him in the slightest if it meant his goals would be achieved.

However, Tiamat commanded death. She had power over her own personal underworld.

When she threw him into the abyss, she instilled those emotions into him. She forced his soul to experience sympathy as it recalled every instance of evil it had ever committed.

And that was enough to drive him insane.

His body twisted and crunched strangely. His bones shattered themselves as his arms snapped in the wrong direction. Blood leaked from his eyes and nose, and foam seeped from his mouth.

Tiamat smiled happily.

This was only the beginning.

Once she brought his mind back and healed it, he still had to undergo a few rounds of physical and soul torture before she let him die.

After all, she was finally getting her revenge!

She couldn't just let it end without properly enjoying it, could she?

Those were her thoughts as she watched the man deteriorate.

And far away in a completely different part of the Ancient Battlefield, a chill ran down Damien's spine.

He suddenly had a strange feeling, as if he had a ticking time bomb in his hands, just waiting to explode.

It was like the second he made a mistake, that bomb would go off and devour him whole.

But...

That must've just been his imagination...

...right?

Chapter 1295 Hunt [2]

The area was still absolutely silent.

After all, the people couldn't easily accept what they'd just seen.

No, did they see anything at all?

As they stood there, their enemies magically disappeared.

It wasn't the work of a Demigod, but a true act of god, a working of fate, something that could only be described as a miracle.

Even those like Iris who stood at the top of the universe had to marvel.

Power like that...was that even possible?

'No, for him, it is more than just possible.'

Unlike the rest, who were frozen in their confusion with blank expressions on their faces, Iris smiled.

She expected nothing less from Damien, and if she was correct, he had left to do something even crazier than this.

'I thought I was getting stronger, but that was just arrogance.'

She saw herself as the peak of the universe because everyone else said she was the peak of the universe.

When she thought of what Damien would achieve after Cosmic Rebirth, she knew he would be extremely powerful, but this was just on another level!

Cosmic Rebirth, she knew he would be extremely powerful, but this was just on another level!

'It seems I must work harder.'

She wasn't disheartened, rather, her fighting spirit was ablaze.

That wasn't just any man, that was her man. Watching him achieve great heights, how could she feel anything but joy?

Though, she wasn't content with that joy.

She, like Rose, Ruyue, and Elena, desired to stand by his side.

And while Damien was never someone they'd logically be able to stand equal to, none of them cared.

Because eventually, they would stand there. Until they stood there, they'd be as close to him as possible, watching his back so he could focus on his path forward without distractions.

Iris moved, leaving behind the perplexed atmosphere the rest shared. Unlike them, she had no plans of returning to Grand Heavens Boundary and living the rest of her life in comfort.

She found her way to Tiamat, who was still mid-way through torturing the Karmic Emperor into a soulless husk.

When their eyes connected, they felt a connection formed through their determination.

Their ambition to grow stronger.

Their desire to not be surpassed so easily.

And they weren't the only ones.

Alucard, Tang Lingzi, and the rest felt their worlds shattering because of that event. They finally realized how low they'd fallen when they settled for their current power.

The motivation they developed through Damien was transmitted through the people close to them, and through those people to even more.

No longer.

No longer would they allow a situation like this to sprout.

No longer would they stand idle and let others lead their home into ruin.

Just like Damien, who stood up on his own and conquered the Ancient Battlefield as someone younger and previously weaker than them all, they would stand by their beliefs with all their hearts and take things into their own hands.

Maybe, just maybe, if an enemy like the Nox appeared again in the future, they wouldn't need the help of a monstrous genius like Damien to solve it.

They'd do it themselves, as the ones who should've been protecting and nurturing those of Damien's generation.

Slowly but surely, a change was taking place.

A change that would revolutionize the entire universe in the future!

Damien didn't immediately go after the Inhuman Emperor or Saint Emperor. He had some cleaning to do before he did.

He killed over 3000 Nox Lords when he exited his Cosmic Rebirth, but there were still a few thousand of those insects scurrying around the Ancient Battlefield.

The universe's Demigods definitely had the ability to take care of the remaining forces, but Damien didn't want to take any risks.

The cleanup after the war was equally important. They'd already lost thousands upon thousands of forces, and they couldn't lose any more.

The universe would heal with time. New Demigods would rise, and as Damien was hell-bent on eradicating the Nox in totality, it would not be forced to regress as it had been throughout its history.

Therefore, it needed people to lead it. Those who participated in this war and had hearts of righteousness or fear of his presence who could protect those budding Divinities until they reached their potential.

The universe would only grow from now on. That was his ideal.

And to make sure it could be carried out properly, he would eliminate everything in its way.

His perception range was something of legends now. The vastly shrunken Ancient Battlefield was completely within his vision.

The war should have moved to the central area by now if one followed conventional standards, but Damien's presence completely erased that original intention.

He crossed the entire plane in a matter of seconds. His gaze swept along its entire gait, and any Nox Demigod he saw would be erased by his word.

There was no need to focus on the act itself. It was a slaughter against Nox Lords who might as well have been powerless civilians before him. They could not fight back, and for the most part, they couldn't even sense his presence.

Instead of reveling in their vain deaths, Damien used them as fuel to gain a better understanding of his abilities in combat.

Most of them were self-explanatory. The growth of his Legend through Devour happened seamlessly and didn't cause negative side effects, and it seemed his soul protection was far sturdier than he originally expected, but that was all guaranteed when the Void Physique was taken into account.

The most curious thing was an ability he didn't expect to gain.

That ability to "perceive" people's inner selves.

It all started with the foundational laws, but Existence Law was far broader than just a sum of their parts.

When the four bundled foundational law aspects were connected in their current relay, they were able to form a mini-universe within him. Though it wasn't complete yet, it was still equivalent to what the Sanctuary currently was.

Existence.

Just what did that word mean?

It encompassed everything. Everything a human could possibly understand was under the veil of existence.

The concept of Nonexistence was absolutely incomprehensible to the human mind. It could only be inferred as the "absence" of existence, however, when all things existence were, as the word suggested, existing, how could one properly wrap one's mind around the meaning of the word?

Whether it be physical or ethereal, to a certain extent, Damien could control it.

And this didn't just include energies, but more elusive concepts like fate and emotion.

The ability to read people, the ability to understand them, came from this particular aspect of the law.

Because they were "existences," he could understand their components, both biological and mental.

It was an extremely strange ability. Even he couldn't fully understand the function of it. However, as he moved through the Ancient Battlefield and slaughtered all enemies he found, he learned just how useful it could be.

These Lords couldn't hold a candle to them, so of course it didn't apply, however, when he suppressed his strength and tried fighting on their level, he found something mystical.

Their attack patterns were engraved in his mind. Their emotional states were as clear as day. He could tell which wounds aggravated them the most and he could tell where the strengths they were confident in were.

With this kind of information, he had an absolute advantage in battle, especially against opponents who didn't have information on him.

It was amazing.

He only started realizing the true worth of the law he was comprehending after testing it with his own hands.

He was only now beginning to truly understand what it meant to walk the path of an Absolute.

And to cement this feeling, as well as to taste true battle for the first time since his exit, he made his way there.

To the Inhuman Emperor.

So he could truly make the most out of that practice dummy before he fought the Saint Emperor.

Chapter 1296 Hunt [3]

Two men stood at the edge of the Ancient Battlefield, uninvolved in the war yet watching as it continued.

They were Primal Sovereigns, not beings who had any stock in it. Orion came to watch over his descendant, while the Ancient Sovereign's reasoning was more vague.

But the deaths of their fellows drove their cause in the same direction as they investigated why their people died.

There was no need for revenge. They were not hunted and killed, they died because they met an enemy they could not defeat.

That didn't change the fact that it was truly a shame.

Primal Sovereigns were not common in this world. Space Beasts would roam the starry skies as they pleased, but they were merely byproducts. They did not have the same status as Primal Sovereigns even though they were of the same race.

When the Ancient Sovereign came here, he was originally planning to ensure that the deaths his fellows suffered were not unjust, and since their deaths were caused by their own conscious decisions, he didn't have anything left to do.

But, beyond his expectations, he found a connection that made him curious about its outcome.

"Did you see this too?"

Orion's words broke the silence between them.

They both gazed into the distance with seemingly no aim, but they were looking at the same place.

"I did not."

The Ancient Sovereign said three simple words, but they meant far more than anyone could imagine.

Orion was dazed by the words he had never heard his eldest sibling say.

"Has there ever been a case before?" He asked dubiously.

"Not even once."

"Wow..."

Orion shook his head in wonder.

"What do you see in that boy?"

He was curious.

He swore loyalty to that man so he could find out more about the Void. He didn't directly contribute, but Damien's presence, power, and connection with Iris were the reason he eventually met the Ancient Sovereign again, who finally told him everything he wished to know about their origins.

And as Damien grew stronger and grew closer to his granddaughter, Orion became more and more curious about him.

He kept doing astonishing things. The greater his state of existence grew, the more impossible Damien's existence seemed.

So he was extremely curious about what the Ancient Sovereign, who possessed sight like no other, saw him.

"..."

The Ancient Sovereign remained quiet for a moment, as if even he had to ponder to find a proper answer to the question.

"At first, there was light..." he began.

"I saw light beyond light and darkness beyond darkness. As they combined in a single form, I saw a man unlike any other, a man with the breath of our Mother."

He spoke without the usual term of address and flow he carried, which caught Orion by surprise.

The Ancient Sovereign himself was a being of strangeness. Even when he was speaking as clearly as possible, his words were twisted in an air of confusion.

"I saw his past, and I saw his present. I saw him grow closer to another, yet move farther away. He became an existence beyond existence while still contained in his mortal shell..."

"...however, you have never been able to see his future."

Orion finished his words, and the Ancient Sovereign nodded in confirmation.

"There is no past, present, or future in that child's life unless he chooses to define them. The future he sees is not a future at all, it is an inevitability, yet also an impossibility. The path he will walk to reach that place, and the path he will take once he arrives..."

The Ancient Sovereign smiled slightly.

"I am excited to observe it."

"Hmm..."

Orion scratched his head awkwardly.

"I still do not quite understand, but it seems he is much greater than expected?"

"No," the Ancient Sovereign cut in.

"Rather, he is much more simple than you make him seem."

Damien was a normal man.

His ambitions weren't so grand as to be considered grand, and his thoughts weren't complex enough to be considered deep.

Yet, in the midst of his simplicity was an implicit complexity that an average being couldn't understand.

"One might say it is Mother's influence that complicates his simple existence, but it is not so."

Damien himself was a contradictory being in ways that he himself didn't understand yet.

A lull of silence fell between the two men as they were entrenched in their own thoughts.

Their conversation went nowhere, and in essence, they merely reiterated things that had been said countless times already.

But they were not ordinary beings. An ordinary conversation with them held immense value.

The Ancient Sovereign couldn't see his future, not because of the Void, but because of Damien himself.

He, who knew all the secrets of the universe, found something he could not see.

And that made him curious beyond curiosity.

"He will go up soon, right?"

"Yes, there is no question about it."

"Then..."

"...he will meet them."

"For better or for worse?"

"..."

Orion smiled wryly.

"Right, there's no answer to that, is there?"

He couldn't do anything but watch.

He wanted to know more than anything else where that journey would lead, but after this event...

Damien had become an anomaly even by their standards.

He achieved something in Cosmic Rebirth that he logically should have only achieved when he was establishing his Godhood.

So where would his path take him from here?

Whether it be his father, Dante Void, or their mother, the Void itself, the paths they'd laid for him were completely torn asunder as he walked them.

Instead of following what they set up for him and easily climbing to strength, he followed his own path without hesitation and became indomitable.

Even for them, existences who'd lived for countless eons, he was an inspiration.

Orion sighed.

"Your life is truly miserable, elder brother."

He couldn't stand this.

He couldn't stand being a mere observer.

But the Ancient Sovereign just shook his head.

"Rather, there is no life This One would rather lead. As a wise young child stated prior, the cosmos needs an observer. Is there any role more important than this?"

The two fell into silence once more.

Their roles...they knew them well.

So as they gazed into the horizon, where a certain anomalous child was meeting his first great enemy after ascension, they shared the same question.

That child...

What was his role?

Did he even have one from the start?

And if he did...

Would he truly follow it, or would he tear down destiny in favor of his own desires?

It was a scene nobody in the entire cosmos had been able to witness until this day.

As observers recording its procession with their existence, they were the first.

They couldn't wait to see what he would show them.

It was a plain like every other, with nothing too special setting it apart.

Two beings stood there alone. All other parties in the vicinity gathered in the distance, millions of kilometers away, and watched with bated breaths as they confronted each other.

As Damien walked up and laid his eyes on that man for the first time, that man also turned to look at him.

"Boy..."

His voice was low, but carried malevolence that couldn't be replicated.

A wide and ruthless grin spread across his face, painting the air with madness as his eyes widened in excitement.

He opened his mouth and infused his breath with Divine Energy, roaring out as his body trembled from intense emotion.

"...YOU HAVE FINALLY COME!"

Damien and the Inhuman Emperor finally met.

And instantly, their battle began!

Chapter 1297 Hunt [4]

Before Damien went to meet the Inhuman Emperor, he killed half of the remaining Nox Lords on the Ancient Battlefield.

He, of course, had the ability to slaughter them all, but he decided against it.

After all, he saw for himself the intensity at which Iris and Tiamat were acting.

The Karmic Emperor was already dead, and as if they were racing against time, the two women rushed to find Nox Lords.

They wanted to take as many of them as possible for themselves before Damien culled them entirely, and who was Damien to impede them?

He had no interest in snuffing out the burning flames of determination in their eyes.

The remaining Nox Lords were prey for them alone, so that they could grow as they wished.

That was his gift to them.

Nevertheless, there were two tasks left to complete once the culling ended.

The first was checking the Saint Emperor's position.

He'd been essentially nonexistent for the entirety of the war, and Damien was concerned about what a man like him was doing with this time.

And he did find him.

The Saint Emperor was unmoving, sitting calmly as if he were waiting for something.

He had a slight smile on his face and looked quite peaceful, but as if sensing Damien's perception sweeping over him, he opened his eyes and nodded.

'He's waiting...for me.'

He didn't know why the Saint Emperor was doing this, but he was absolutely certain he was waiting for him.

He was likely waiting for him since the Ancient Battlefield opened and he learned Damien was alive.

"..."

Damien pursed his lips.

No matter how much he wanted to go find out everything that mysterious man was hiding, he couldn't go haphazardly.

He had to take down distractions like the Inhuman Emperor first, and before he even did that, there was one final important task.

'Status'

He thought the word, and for the first time since ascension, he saw the system's appraisal of him.

The status window changed upon reaching Divinity.

Sections vanished while other sections appeared. At this level, Damien wasn't the only one whose strength was pointless to measure in numbers.

Demigods no longer needed stats to describe their physical state, nor did they need a section to tell them what their skills or traits were. All of this became deeply ingrained in their bodies upon ascending and reached a point where it was impossible for the system to know them better than themselves.

However, the status window did still exist.

It merely showed different information privy only to Divinities.

[Status]

[Damien Void]

????

Male - Age 65

Level 400

Divinity: Hegemon God

Legend: Mythical Hero

Title(s): [???????, Apostle of the Void, Evolver, Heaven's Wrath, Supreme Genius]

Physique: Void Physique

Authorities:

[Devouring - 100%]

[Immortality - 50%]

[Elemental - 75%]

[Spacetime - 75%]

[Samsara - 75%]

[Cosmic Duality - 75%]

[Existence - 50%]

The changes were a plenty and Damien spent a long time finding their meaning before he went and confronted the Inhuman Emperor.

Firstly, he'd finally overcome the chasm known as "Level 399" and stepped into the next stage, which was satisfying to see.

The section that showed how much experience he needed to get to the next level also disappeared, marking the most definitive difference between lower and higher existences.

From this point forth, it wasn't so easy to get stronger. One needed to expand their Divinity and flesh it out while building their Legend more and more until they finally reached the threshold of Godhood.

Of course, there were stages to this process, however, Damien and the rest of the Demigods in the lower universe still didn't know what these stages were.

The two sections that followed gave clues, though.

The section titled "Divinity" showed the name of his Divinity, the one he chose for it, and served as a constant reminder of what he was meant to achieve.

And the "Legend" section which termed his current state, "Mythical Hero," was the replacement of the "Experience" section.

Mythical Hero was likely a level one's Legend could reach. As Damien thought about it, he somewhat figured out how the progression of said terms would go.

There was likely something along the lines of "Spiritual God" in the future, where the Legend he built became enough to garner worship from the masses. Perhaps there were other levels for different paths that he couldn't think of, but as long as he kept growing his Legend, he was certain to find them eventually.

This was the new way of progressing power that he needed to become accustomed to.

It did make him a little happy.

Now, he wasn't the only one looking at a nigh useless status window. The rest of his peers would have to suffer alongside him!

The last change was the biggest one in terms of appearance.

Where stats, skills, and traits used to be was left a single section, titled "Authorities."

Authorities were the power of a Demigod. They were, for most people, the law foundation that formed one's Divinity, and encompassed every part of a Divine's power.

Damien's case was strange.

Devour became its own complete Authority. This was the system's attempt at quantifying the Void, but the most it could see was what the Void allowed it to, so only the singular skill ingrained in Damien's body appeared.

Immortality was a reference to his regenerative abilities and bloodlines. The power to give him a true immortal body that couldn't be killed, something even Gods didn't have.

And the next four were the fused laws that made up Existence.

Their "completion rate" which Damien could only assume had something to do with reaching Godhood, was stuck at 75%, while the Authority of Existence was at 50%.

It wasn't hard to rationalize this one.

He had yet to combine those four fundamentals. Once they reached 100%, they would combine and his Existence Authority would reach 75%, and from there it was just a matter of comprehending Existence itself.

The new status window was far more streamlined than ever before, which Damien quite appreciated, and, within its simplicity, he could feel the complex workings of Divinity.

The powers that used to be under his control were still under his control, however, anything unrelated to his Divinity would be weakened to the extreme, which would eventually land him in a spot where he had no choice but to forgo everything else for its sake.

Luckily, Damien put his everything into that Divinity, so even if he did experience this consequence to an extent, it wouldn't be nearly as terrifying as it was for others.

'If I want to know more and confirm what I think I know, I have to go to the Heavenly World. My time in the lower universe is almost up.'

That was Damien's conclusion.

Everything from this point forth was in the Heavenly World. There was almost nothing left for him in Grand Heavens Boundary.

He already knew what he was going to do with his time before leaving, and he already made plans to leave.

But the first step was not in the Heavenly World or Grand Heavens Boundary, it was right here on the Ancient Battlefield.

Damien walked forward, his eyes landing on that man.

The Inhuman Emperor looked at him as well, those manic eyes wide and unsettling.

And they began their fight.

Chapter 1298 Hunt [5]

The Inhuman Emperor's Divinity was far simpler than Damien's.

Its name was "Blissful Agony."

It did not refer to finding bliss in a state of agony, but rather, in line with his character, represented the bliss he felt forcing other people to endure agony.

The attacks he used were more akin to torture than killing techniques, and the laws he used had been convoluted to the point where they weren't necessarily laws anymore.

His Demonic Providence, Executioner, also backed his Divinity extremely well.

Using a combination of Blood Laws, Metal Laws, Illusion Laws, and several others, he created a power that was hard to explain as just magic.

When the Inhuman Emperor heard of Damien for the first time, his thought was just as simple as every other thought he'd ever had.

Such a talented human was a perfect subject. Someone who could hold the weight of the universe's hope on his shoulders...how blissful would it be to see him suffer?

He couldn't wait to find out.

When Damien appeared, he was bursting with excitement and couldn't contain himself.

Uncaring of anything else, he charged forth with his Divine Energy flaring.

He infused his mana with a plethora of effects like pain amplification and wound aggravation as he struck out, forming a serrated blade and covering it with an aura of rust that would dig into his enemy's skin and force its way into their bloodstream.

As long as the rust particles made their way into a practitioner's bloodstream, it was already his win.

They would not be able to endure what came next.

Damien knew this.

He didn't know much about the Saint Emperor or Soul Emperor, but he'd killed and devoured so many of the Inhuman Emperor's subordinates that he was well aware of all of this man's abilities.

Yet, he didn't move.

He stood stalwart as the Inhuman Emperor appeared before him and slashed out with his blade.

The attack was aimed at his arm, not a fatal location.

And Damien offered that arm up to be cut.

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

The eyes watching from the distance collectively widened in disbelief.

The mana felt more like bloodlust. It twisted and warped the surrounding air, bringing forth a purgatory of suffering for anyone who got close enough to feel it.

In the midst of that purgatory, Damien felt its effects firsthand.

The sensation of his soul burning, his limbs being eviscerated, his bones being shattered one by one, and countless other torturous pains.

However, they were just illusions.

Time stopped.

Damien closed his eyes and took a breath.

"Huu..."

He exhaled, and with the mana infused in his breath, the illusions themselves were dispersed into nothingness.

He looked down at his arm with a smile.

The Inhuman Emperor's blade was mid-clash against his skin, yet, despite its power and sharpness, it could not penetrate his skin.

'As expected, the Authority of Immortality is broken.'

Or was this just the Void Physique's doing?

Regardless, Damien started to understand the strength of his body, and he was satisfied with such an outcome.

He stepped back.

Nothing changed. The Inhuman Emperor maintained his posture.

Damien casually took a few steps, walking behind the Inhuman Emperor.

"This is nice too."

He pulled his fist back.

Time resumed.

BOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

He punched out, his fist slamming into the Inhuman Emperor's skull.

CRACK!

It was so loud even the onlookers could hear it, that sound.

The Inhuman Emperor was pushed into the ground, cracking it with his face.

Before he could understand what happened, Damien lifted his foot and stomped on his already cracked skull.

BANG!

The back of his head caved in disgustingly.

'If I control existence, then...'

Damien flicked his finger, sending his mana into the Inhuman Emperor's body.

He could feel it.

That man's mana.

'Become mine.'

He exerted his influence, and the mana had no choice but to follow.

"AGH!"

The Inhuman Emperor coughed out blood. His body turned a painful shade of red.

However, he wasn't going to be defeated so easily,

In that instant, he rolled to the side and flared his mana, using it as a crutch to lift himself up.

He manifested another saw, along with several needles and other torture tools.

He slashed out before Damien could read his movements.

As expected, the blade couldn't cut his skin, but that didn't matter. It was just a feint.

While Damien focused on the blade, the needles flew through the darkness between space and stabbed into his eyes and ears.

His blood splattered for the first time.

Damien's hands went to his eyes, his teeth gritted in pain.

The Inhuman Emperor wasn't one to miss such an opportunity.

He created chains of mana that held Damien's body in place, and in the same breath, he summoned a new device.

It consisted of four pillars in the four cardinal directions. The two to Damien's left and right connected to the chains on his arms and legs, while the one behind him held his head and the one in front held his waist.

They moved as one.

They pulled Damien in every direction. His torso was forced forward, while his neck was tugged back. His arms and legs went in four different directions away from each other until they were practically seconds away from tearing off his body.

VOOOOM!

Damien's body went aflame with mana as he tried to cut the chains, but the Inhuman Emperor learned from his mistakes.

He may have still been young, but Damien was no amateur.

Pain amplification, wound aggravation, festering rot, paralysis toxins, soul-rending poisons...

Every method he had at his disposal was used to make sure Damien could neither move nor withstand what was going to be done to him.

"Kekeke..." the Inhuman Emperor cackled.

"KEKEKEKEKEKE!"

He couldn't stop himself.

As he inserted needle after needle into that man's seemingly impenetrable skin, as he listened to that man roar and scream in pain, he couldn't contain the ecstasy in his very soul.

Eventually, it happened.

Damien's arms and legs could no longer bear the pressure. They were torn away from his body with no sense of cleanliness at all, leaving large gaping and uneven wounds in their place.

Only a few seconds later, his waist was torn away as well, leaving him with nothing more than the top half of his body.

But...

"Kekeke, boy, play with me for a bit longer!"

The Inhuman Emperor was well equipped for such tasks. He wasn't willing to lose his fun so easily.

His power had one miraculous effect that allowed him to reach his current position, even if everything else was discarded.

That was a power eerily similar to Life, but far too twisted to be called such.

Vitality flowed into Damien's broken body.

His soul was malformed into a size befitting of its current vessel.

Despite his grievous wounds, he would not die as long as this state was maintained.

The Inhuman Emperor was giddy as he went to work.

His mind was consumed by the screams of his victim, almost to the point where his reaction looked orgasmic.

Yet, he felt a bit strange.

He felt like, vaguely, somewhere beyond reality, a voice was speaking to him.

"So is that how it is?"

Damien nodded in understanding.

"I didn't know I could use mana like this, but it was a good lesson."

He stood with his foot on the Inhuman Emperor's head.

The previous scene was obviously not real. Since when was Damien someone who could be toyed around with like that?

But it wasn't an illusion either.

It was a reflection of the Inhuman Emperor's mana. It was the thoughts infused in his energy, the desire that provoked him to fight.

The Inhuman Emperor was currently experiencing bliss in that desire, but his soul was no longer attached to his body.

Rather, it was in Damien's hands.

'I want to take some time to play around with it, but it can't be helped.'

He was interested in how souls functioned, and this one would've been nice to experiment on since there was no need to feel remorseful to someone like him.

But, unfortunately, Damien was in need of its power, so he'd have to wait to find a better soul for that purpose.

"Before that..."

He looked down at the man below him.

"It would've been a good battle, I'm sure, but you're not that much better than Immortal Blood Asura, so I probably wouldn't have been able to gain anything significant from it anyway."

Damien clenched his fist and pressed all his weight into his foot.

CRUNCH!

The Inhuman Emperor's soul disappeared into a void of blackness as his everything was given to Damien, and his body was crushed into nothingness by pure physical power.

Damien smiled.

"Good fight."

He looked into the distance.

It was time to go meet that man.

So he could finally put an end to his time on this damn battlefield.

Chapter 1299 Hunt [6]

"Are you sure you want to go alone?"

"I must. This is a matter that began with me, so it must end with me as well."

"... I understand, however, I'm going to come with you. There's still a possibility you will—"

"No, you have something better to do, don't you? There should be roughly 500 Lords remaining."

"That doesn't matter. You know they won't have any impact on my power."

"Maybe not, but you are in need of experience more than power. Now that you have awakened your true self, you must become equipped with using your strengths to their full potential."

"I don't like how right you are."

"Yet, right I am regardless."

"Haa, I get it. But when I finish, I'm coming. Don't think you can stop me."

"Mm, it is nice to have a friend like you."

"Friend, I'm honored."

"You should be."

The last conversation between Tiamat and Iris went something along those lines.

It took a bit longer for them to part, since Iris was adamant on hearing Tiamat say those last few words one more time, but it couldn't be helped.

They eventually separated.

As Iris went to take care of the rest of the rodents hiding in various parts of the battlefield, Tiamat finally approached that place.

A man sat there on his own.

He wasn't maintaining a stance of nonintervention like the Saint Emperor, but his visage was just as calm.

He had no plans to interfere with the Ancient Battlefield. Doing so would go against the mission he was fulfilling.

Nox Emperors were privy to the Nox's hive mind network, but their memories would not be transmitted like the lower-level beings.

Because the Saint Emperor made sure to cut the connections of those who accompanied him on that day, the Soul Emperor wasn't aware of the destruction of the Demon Abyss, as he was away from Al'Katra when it happened.

He didn't care if the Nox died out here, because he still thought he could return to the lower universe and wait for the race to return on its own.

Unfortunately for him, his plans had been ruined before they even had a chance to begin. Damien really had a habit of slapping him in the face like that.

But that was beside the point.

Whether he intervened or not, this day would have eventually come.

Tiamat approached without hiding her presence. She wanted him to know who had come.

His eyelids calmly separated, those soulless orbs staring into her eyes.

"You...welcome back," he said indifferently.

"Yes, I have returned, and..."

Tiamat's eyes were ablaze with fury.

The Soul Emperor was the second oldest after the Saint Emperor. He had been alive for at least 100,000 years already, interfering with the universe to deliver World and Universal Cores to his creators.

He was present from the beginning of Tiamat's existence to the moment she was betrayed, and of the Emperors who were responsible, he was one of the main causes.

Tiamat was a hindrance. She never had a connection to the creators in the first place, nor was she born from the Demon Abyss. She was a Nox in name, but she wasn't truly a Nox at all.

She had plans to overturn the race that ruined her and rebuild it in her image, however, what image was that?

It was certain it wouldn't be the image the creators envisioned.

Therefore, no matter how valuable of an asset she would have been, he sacrificed her.

Unlike those who envied her strength or feared her authority, who had long died out, he who opposed her because their interests were misaligned remained alive.

As did the Saint Emperor, a man who only had one reason to support the coup.

He was bored.

If she had to choose between them, she'd rather go after that man, but he was already being confronted by someone who was a much better match,

Therefore, she came here.

"You are still acting like a dog after all these millennia. I should have never expected anything else from you," she spat condescendingly.

The Soul Emperor didn't react.

"I am a vessel for my master's will. We are vessels for the master's will. You, however..."

"...are a mistake."

He stood up calmly. He was like an old man who'd lost all purpose in life.

Yet, there was purpose behind those soulless eyes. A single-minded purpose that didn't require the existence of a soul uniquely his own at all.

"Did you come here to vent your emotions, or do you plan to once again impede my path?" The Soul Emperor asked.

Tiamat scowled in disgust.

"Your path is nonexistent, and my reason doesn't matter. Know that you will not die by my hands. There is a much worse fate in store for you."

"I see..."

The Soul Emperor nodded.

"Then, let us fight."

Tiamat attacked first, or at least, she thought she did.

She stepped forward and summoned the mana of death in her soul, the flames of vengeance empowering them greatly.

However, before she could release any attacks, a strange formless impact struck her, pushing her mind out of her body.

Like she was astral projecting, she watched her body from the air above. It was in a stunned state, and the Soul Emperor paid it no mind, instead looking at her soul form floating in the sky.

"This is enough."

He raised his frail arm and shakily pointed at her.

There was nothing, but she felt it. If she didn't dodge, she'd die instantly.

Tiamat gritted her teeth.

She had nothing else to do in the First Dungeon where she was imprisoned but think.

She understood her power to its greatest depths, and as someone who specialized in the art of death, she paid close attention to her soul.

After tens of thousands of years of waiting, she trained to a point where her soul control could rival even the best of masters.

She wasn't going to lose so easily!

She infused her will into the incorporeal vessel she currently inhabited, and as if she were the wind itself, she drifted through the air and became one with it.

The formless impact didn't hit her, but she understood its horror clearly.

'I will not be able to return to my body easily.'

The Soul Emperor had moved for that purpose. With him so close to her body, even trying to approach it would spell death.

Therefore, Tiamat had no choice but to fight in her soul state.

'All pain will be multiplied, and death will follow my every move. If I make even a single wrong move...'

It didn't need to be explained further.

'Still, I have not been put at a major disadvantage.'

She was closer than ever to death when she acted as a soul. Therefore, her power of death would be multiplied just as much as the risk of falling into its embrace.

Losing wasn't an option.

Neither was falling here.

To fight against a man who controlled souls in a soul state was likely the stupidest decision one could make, but it lit Tiamat's heart aflame with tongues of excitement.

She was here for revenge.

What better way was there to exact it than destroying the enemy in the aspect he was most confident in?

Her soul was dyed black, a different blackness than Damien's, and power surged forth.

The battle had only just begun.

She was the Empress of Death, and one day, she would become the Goddess who ruled over it in totality.

A mere dog of some unnamed pests from the Heavenly World wouldn't be the one to end her reign!

Chapter 1300 Hunt [7]

Tiamat's Divinity was called True Death.

Just as Elena chased the peak of Life, Tiamat chased the absolute peak of Death. She took the concept past its regular limits and gave it more meaning, fleshing out its every aspect.

True Death was a concept that mirrored Nonexistence. It did not follow the cycle of samsara, but trumped life in all aspects, being the absolute end that consumed life no matter what.

The soul and ego did not get reborn, they were wiped from existence and replaced.

It was a terrifying definition that made the concept impossible to escape or cope with. It was impossible to see as anything other than what it was.

However, she was also an ambitious person. She didn't plan to use Death so single-mindedly.

Just as True Death encompassed the negative and horror-inducing aspects, it also covered the positive ones.

Peace, bliss, a new start, an end to suffering. Death was worshipped by just as many as it was feared by. It was a concept that had been deified, and some regarded it as the reward for all the suffering that life brought.

Ironically, as someone who could see both sides of Death and bring them together in one Divinity, Tiamat wasn't someone who could die easily.

But neither was the Soul Emperor.

Unlike others, he didn't form a Divinity for himself. He formed a Divinity of Absolute Servitude, dedicating everything he had to his masters.

His soul was consumed by that Divinity, but in return, he gained the ability to influence the souls of others.

Obedience that stemmed from the very soul, that was his power.

These two Divinities couldn't be compared as they were so different. In direct confrontation, neither really had much power over the other.

However, the difference was in their foundation.

What was easier to break?

The absolute loyalty of a dog, or the inevitability of death?

The answer was obvious.

Tiamat was still in soul form, but she didn't lose out to the Soul Emperor at all.

She became one with the air and one with the earth. She was so mobile that it was hard for the frail-looking and slow-moving Soul Emperor to land another attack after the first.

This battle wasn't really a battle. The two combatants did attack each other, but rather than aiming to cause damage, their intent was to fracture each other's Divinity.

They implicitly understood that neither of them could kill the other directly. They were equally matched, and just as Tiamat had an Authority similar to Immortality, the Soul Emperor couldn't die unless his masters wanted him to.

Therefore, it became a battle wholly dependent on spirit.

Who was more set in their beliefs?

Whose beliefs held more power?

This was the foundation of all conflict, and it was perfectly reflected by them.

Tiamat had a simple goal.

She had to plant a seed of distrust in the Soul Emperor's hearts. If he even slightly doubted his masters, he would expose a flaw she didn't have.

And as she thought about how to go about such a task, she came up with a few options.

The first was to try and make him realize that his masters didn't care about him, but that idea was quickly thrown out the window.

There was no way the Soul Emperor wasn't already aware of how they viewed the Nox. He'd likely already accepted that his masters would never hold the same emotions towards his efforts as he held towards them.

The fact that he accepted it and still decided to follow them was a testament to his loyalty, and such loyalty couldn't easily be broken.

The second option was more reasonable. She had to devalue the creators of the Nox.

If she could make them seem less all-powerful than he viewed them to be, there was a chance.

And how would she do that?

Well, the question came full circle.

She had to defeat him.

Nobody else.

Because she was an outlier. Her existence itself was a "mistake" those creators made.

Tiamat was not naive. She already understood the secret behind her birth.

Somehow, somewhere, one of those creators abandoned their child in the Abyss. She was not a Nox, but a being far above their race.

The Soul Emperor refused to accept this, or perhaps he didn't know at all.

If she could defeat him here, he would be forced to accept that he had less worth than a failure. Moreover, if he realized her status, wouldn't he feel like the creators themselves disdained him?

She was confident the strategy would work, but to make it plausible, she first had to defeat him in a battle of wits.

"That is a way to shatter him entirely. Before that, I must create a crack in his armor!"

The Soul Emperor was impossible to read. He rarely ever showed himself in public, and he never made obvious moves that allowed people to understand the full scope of his power.

The fear people felt upon hearing his name was brought about through rumors and whispers of actions that may or may not have been his doing.

But facing him directly, Tiamat realized that his status was completely justified.

His control over souls was monstrous.

He didn't have any law affinities, nor did he use anything like a Demonic Providence yet.

Instead, the natural dominance he had over souls was what placed Tiamat in her current predicament.

Whenever he pushed his hand out, an impulsive wave of strange energy was sent into the atmosphere. It was formless and colorless with no presence whatsoever.

That pure soul energy transmuted from mana had many functions. It could disassemble souls, control their growth, steal their attributes, instill torture, and more.

In the current battle, it had been used for the main purpose of corralling Tiamat and controlling her movements, but those fluctuations were still deadly.

If they hit, her soul would be torn to shreds. Even if she could piece it back together, the advantage he'd gain in that time would make it extremely difficult for her to regain even footing.

Nevertheless, Tiamat was still dodging everything properly, and the Soul Emperor had yet to use his full power.

They were in the process of scoping each other out and probing. Until now, that is.

Several dozens of minutes had passed, and finally, they tacitly agreed that their current battle method would not work.

"As expected...you are too dangerous."

VOOOOOOOM!

The Soul Emperor's mana burst forth, putting severe pressure on the atmosphere.

A field was formed around him, a domain of spirits. Countless vengeful souls and tortured souls he'd reaped in the past appeared as his legion, forced to follow his commands.

"Death Empress, do not impede my path."

He looked into her soul with those eyes. It felt like she was frozen in that moment.

However, she stood tall and refused to give in.

"Don't get it twisted," she spat.

"You are the one impeding me with your nonsense. My actions here are nothing more than the consequences of yours in the past. Instead of speaking in tongues, accept your fate and die."

It seemed the Soul Emperor found a way through her Divinity, but she'd found one around his as well.

The battle would be short.

Whoever struck true first would win.

And as they were both prepared, they moved.

It was the most sacred battle method for Divinities.

To directly place their Divinities side by side and allow them to compete, to see whose ideals were worth more.

Under the world's eye, they stood trial.

With only the Heavens themselves as their judge.