

# Void 1301

Chapter 1301 Hunt [8]

The so-called Sacred Combat, what did it mean?

It was an ingrained tradition in the souls of Demigods that they would follow in moments of deep desire even without realizing its existence.

That was why these Demigods who spent their entire lives in the lower universe were partaking in a tradition only truly known to the Heavenly World.

Two Demigods would face each other.

Knowing that a head-on collision would be ineffective, forcing them to spend days or weeks fighting until one side gained the advantage or ran out of mana, they chose a different method.

They condensed the height of their laws into a single attack and pinpointed the weakness in their enemy's Divinity, aiming to end it in one blow.

Whoever could strike that blow first would win regardless of whether they dealt fatal damage or not. Because Sacred Combat was the process of cracking the other party's Divinity.

Being able to do so clearly set one apart from their opponent, and even if the opponent wished to fight more, they would lose their opportunity.

After all, a crack in one's Divinity was fatal enough even if the actual damage wasn't the same.

Winning a Sacred Combat illustrated not only one's skills and the depths of one's ideals, but it clearly outlined their perception and sight to be able to see through another's Divinity.

This wasn't an easy task at all, especially since Divinities were far more numerous than laws.

The process wasn't so streamlined in the lower universe. Since it was carried out on instinct, the people involved didn't realize the significance of their achievements.

However, the base concept was the same.

As Tiamat and the Soul Emperor stood across from each other with their Divine Energy raging, the Soul Emperor made the first move.

In what could be considered an act of grace, or the maintenance of honor, the Soul Emperor returned Tiamat's body to her.

From the air, she looked down at it warily.

"What is this?" She questioned.

"Nothing," the Soul Emperor responded.

"As it has come to this, the master's name is at stake in this battle. Advantages such as this will not be tolerated if their honor must be defended."

"Tch."

Tiamat clicked her tongue and reattached her soul to her body as if she was doing so unwillingly, however, internally, she was smiling.

If he was staking so much on this, it gave her another opening to exploit.

"Very well, however, what happens if you lose face for your master with such words?" She asked, provoking him.

The Soul Emperor's eyes rarely ever showed expression, but they were especially sharp at this time.

"That is an impossible outcome."

"Hah."

Tiamat scoffed and stretched the limbs that she could now feel again.

Once she was reacclimatized to her physical state, she summoned her mana once more.

"Then, shall we begin?"

She suppressed the hatred in her heart.

Revenge and the likes, those were her motivations to engage in this battle, but they were unimportant now.

The second she achieved victory here, her revenge would be far sweeter than if she just killed him.

Therefore, for the sake of that victory, she put all those feelings away.

She concentrated on her Divinity. She looked deep into True Death and pulled together the height of her laws.

A force that combined the bliss and the tragedy of death, a force that encompassed both good and evil, a force that represented true duality even within a singular law. That force appeared around her body and acted as fuel for her strength.

Meanwhile, the Soul Emperor did the same.

The Absolute Servitude the souls he commanded were forced into, he harnessed it to empower himself. He sacrificed them for power, and dedicated that power to the ones he served, entirely willing to lay his own life down in the same way for their sakes.

Without a single hypocritical bone in his body, viewing himself the exact same way he viewed those he controlled without prejudice or arrogance, and using that vision as grounds to call his servitude absolute, he gathered his mana as well.

The two walked up to each other without a word. The domain around the Soul Emperor was consumed and turned into an aura around his body, wispy and almost formless with just a few traces of white in its atmosphere.

It contrasted Tiamat's aura greatly, exuding a subtlety that her thick and murky black aura didn't have.

They were ten steps apart.

Tiamat had a thought.

What was the core of the Soul Emperor's Divinity?

What was it that cemented his servitude in stone?

Why did he choose to view himself as a slave, and why was he, who rose to the peak of their race, willing to be one?

The depths of his loyalty were known to all, but the reasoning behind it was a mystery.

Nine steps.

Could there have been a story between them?

Maybe the Soul Emperor received some kind of grace from the creators that made him want to serve them with all his heart.

If so, his unyielding nature would've been explainable, and the heights he saw in them would make his lack of desire for power understandable as well.

Eight steps.

It couldn't be so simple. 100,000 years of servitude couldn't be bought with such fleeting loyalty.

Perhaps the lifetime of a mortal could be supported by a life-saving grace, but with immortality came independence. The fact that this nature had no position in his heart was telling.

Seven steps.

Then, was there a deeper reasoning? Perhaps the Soul Emperor had some sort of connection to the creators that other Nox didn't have.

He might've been an illegitimate child working his hardest for their recognition, or he might have been something of a religious fanatic who would do anything to get closer to his god.

Six steps.

Five steps.

Four steps.

The Soul Emperor wasn't that type of person.

For as long as Tiamat knew of him, he was a person without a soul.

The stories told in those days of when he was young made it difficult to give this man a backstory.

He was always soulless. It wasn't something instilled in him at a later date or something he sacrificed when he gained Divinity. The reason he had no hesitation in sacrificing his sense of self for the creators was because he didn't have much of one from the start.

Three steps.

Two steps.

They were only a few feet away from each other at this point, and Tiamat realized something as she once again felt his presence from a close distance.

A flaw that had remained hidden for so long, one that not even the Soul Emperor was aware of.

'It was never so complicated.'

The Nox were creatures of vice, and their creators were just as consumed by greed.

Whether they had deep-seated schemes or long-term plans for unknown purposes, they never cared enough about the Nox to show them any sort of consideration.

There was no way for the Soul Emperor to genuinely form such a mindset.

As long as he was a Nox, his mindset was inherently flawed, because he was created with a completely different nature that needed to be tamed.

One step.

Only one step remained.

And Tiamat found her answer.

'His loyalty was never natural to begin with.'

There was a flaw.

A flaw that had remained hidden for so long, one that not even the Soul Emperor was aware of.

Nobody could've thought of it because of its simplicity.

For the Soul Emperor whose character had always remained the same, nobody would've made such an assumption, especially since he'd reached his current heights.

But that was it.

There was no other explanation.

And Tiamat could intuitively feel that she was right.

'That loyalty...'

There was no more distance left to cover.

And now that she had her answer...

'...was artificially planted in him at birth.'

...it was time to attack.

Chapter 1302 Hunt [9]

They moved at the same time.

To call their motions themselves attacks was wrong, because with the speed and power imbued in them, even a regular mortal would be able to dodge.

However, the intent behind them was to kill, nothing more and nothing less.

The Soul Emperor raised his withered arm and placed his finger on Tiamat's forehead, while Tiamat did the same for him.

And the attacks they prepared were unleashed directly onto the Divinity of their opponent.

Tiamat frowned as she felt it.

The Soul Emperor also used those ten steps to judge what the root of her Divinity was, the truth behind True Death.

The conclusion he came to was far more complex than hers.

Tiamat was born in that kind of place.

A place devoid of anything, where only she existed.

She walked a lonely road from that point. Everything she ever cherished was taken away from her by death, and at some point, even her psyche was consumed by the concept.



She turned into an agent of death by the time she was matured, and she remained that way until she reached Divinity.

Her entire journey was crazed.

The number of Nox that died to her was uncountable. It was likely a similar number to what Damien killed when he destroyed the Demon Abyss.

But unlike him, who used the power of the corrupted foreign material to instantly cut their lives off, she took each and every one directly.

She was dangerous. Just as much as death chose her, she chose it.

The True Death she finally established after walking such a path was, contrary to what most believed, a somewhat immature move from her.

It was innocent.

Because while the side of her that wished for her enemies to be erased in totality, to lose any presence in this world and be forgotten, silently receiving the worst of punishments by their lonesome...

...she wanted those she cared for to experience only bliss when they entered its embrace.

There was nothing wrong with this. Her attachments couldn't be considered a weakness unless she deemed them to be.

Therefore, there was nothing to pick apart about her reasoning for forming a Divinity like True Death. It was not only ruthless and noble, it perfectly encapsulated her being.

The Soul Emperor had to take the opposite route from Tiamat to attack her. Rather than facing the "individuality" within the Divinity, he had to attack the concept of True Death itself.

And as someone who controlled souls, this was the perfect method for him.

Tiamat's Divinity denied Samsara. It put Death above Life and disallowed their harmony.

While the universe functioned with the Wheel of Samsara governing its dead, that didn't mean other beliefs were discredited.

Whether it be the afterlife, nonexistence, or the complete absence of death, the universe allowed one to hold the beliefs they did, and when their souls were reincarnated, their egos would be given sufficient reward or punishment based on their beliefs.

Damien wished for nonexistence, so that was what he received.

But to call it True Death when it was just one of the many facets of death was wrong. This was the basis of the Soul Emperor's attacks.

The souls he carried were proof. They were souls he stole from the Wheel of Samsara, thus proving its existence as the ultimate authority.

This truth struck Tiamat's Divinity in that metaphysical plane, and it became her job to fight it.

Meanwhile, Tiamat's attack was already said.

She targeted the very core of the Soul Emperor's belief.

The fact that he was someone the creators cared for, the fact that his loyalty was valid, or that it was even his own.

The "truth" that he was instilled with such loyalty and it wasn't naturally bred would utterly collapse his sense of self, which, in turn, would do the same to his Divinity.

However, unlike the Soul Emperor, she didn't have definitive proof of her claim.

It was a gamble.

The Soul Emperor's attack was surefire. Once Tiamat lost out, it had a 100% chance of piercing her Divinity, even if the cut was shallow.

On the other hand, Tiamat's attack was riskier and had the potential to miss, but she succeeded, she'd directly cripple him in that moment.

Two different paths and two different strategies clashed, and as the two remained standing silently on the Ancient Battlefield without a hint of movement, they partook in the most direct and deep battle they could possibly have.

At some point, Iris appeared above them with a frown on her face.

'Seriously...even if the main enemy is gone, is it normal to leave yourself so unguarded?'

She complained, but it wasn't an unworthy complaint. Even though she'd finished taking care of the rest of the Nox Lords remaining, leaving only the Soul Emperor and Saint Emperor alive, the war wasn't necessarily over.

There were still traitors hidden in the ranks, people with the same goal as the Soul Emperor to keep their allegiance with the Grand Heavens Boundary side for the sake of survival.

People like that were the reason their universe was so fractured in the current era.

During the last war, the Ancient Battlefield didn't open, so those people had a chance to fester over thousands of years.

Now that they were stuck here until the last two Emperors met their ends, it was the perfect time for a culling, so their universe would never be put in such a situation again.

At least, not in the short term.

It was hard to avoid bad seeds even in the greatest of crops, but if a precedent was set, the opportunities for them to grow became far more constrained.

Nevertheless, that process was left to Alucard and Tang Lingzi, who became the de facto leaders of their side after the last battle and the deaths of most of the universe's strongest.

Iris wanted to go to Damien first, but...

'From the look in his eye at that time, this isn't a battle that anyone should interfere with.'

She set up a defensive barrier around the two currently entrapped in Sacred Combat and waited.

She could picture it.

Right now, Damien was probably meeting that terrifying man.

He who had lived more than anyone else, he whose motives remained unknown for millions upon millions upon millions of years...

That man was someone whose entire being symbolized the unknown, and for that reason, just thinking about fighting him made one feel an implicit sense of fear.

Iris was definitely worried, but there was nothing she could do.

This was a battle of fate.

Just as Damien and the Saint King were fated to clash in the past, Damien had reached his fate with the Saint Emperor now.

Nobody knew how it would turn out.

Nobody knew anything about either of their combat power.

And nobody could tell why they were so focused on each other's existence.

Those facts were known only to them.

Only to the two men who were now facing each other somewhere on the Ancient Battlefield.

No, they were not on the current battlefield.

Their meeting place was outside the bounds of this plane, in an area that had already vanished as the circle closed.

Only here could they fight without witnesses, speak without ears listening in on them, and experience this encounter to its full potential.

Only here would they be able to sever the twisted fate between them.

And so, they met.

It was time to begin the battle that would make or break the universe's destructive fate.

Chapter 1303 Saint Emperor [1]

"Do you know how long I've lived?"

The Saint Emperor stood with his back turned.

When Damien appeared behind him, he didn't turn to look at him, but he immediately started a conversation.

Damien looked at that back silently.

Even now, with his newfound power, he couldn't see through this man at all.

That back was opaque. It was so fully packed with experience and defense that nobody could see through it, even if they were far stronger.

Damien wasn't here to converse.

He wanted to start fighting as soon as possible and end his fate with this man, but for some reason, he felt obligated to answer.

"I have a rough idea," he said slowly, lowering his hostility.

"As of today, it has been 999,999,999 years. Quite coincidental, isn't it? Despite how long I have been chasing you and you have been chasing me, the day of our fated encounter occurred on this instance."

The Saint Emperor smiled lightly.

"It was a very long time. I cannot properly remember the beginning anymore, however, even then, I was curious about my existence."

He started to tell a story.

"There are many of us who were born with this question in our hearts, however, the majority of our race lacks it. I was the first. At that time, only I had the ability to truly possess a sense of identity."

"And as I watched my people, I realized how pathetic they were. I realized the truth behind our existence early, and I was crushed by that realization."

"What was I to do? Submit? Live in silence allowing myself to be controlled?

Resist?"

"The answer I found was none of the above."

The Saint Emperor turned around.

His eyes were like that of a snake, but for the most part, he was a handsome man. His appearance was more human than any other Nox. If he didn't have their signature ash-grey skin, it would've been difficult to tell him apart from any normal man.

"Our existence was meaningless. The Nox Race never had its own purpose from the start, and being born into this race as a being with spirituality was the ultimate consequence for me."

"Therefore, I rebelled. I rebelled by forsaking my race entirely and acting only for myself."

Damien frowned.

He didn't know why this story was being told, nor could he understand its significance.

The weight of the Saint Emperor's words was heavy. It weighed down on his mind as the man kept talking, allowing him to understand the darkness that brewed in his heart during those ancient times.

"Everyone was so weak," the Saint Emperor continued.

"We did not know how to use mana properly. We did not know there existed a realm of Gods above. We fought between ourselves as if the entire world belonged to us, when, in reality, we were nothing more than specks of dust in the true expanse of existence." "And that..."

The Saint Emperor's eyes sharpened.

"...was just too boring." "Boring?"

Damien replied subconsciously. It wasn't the word he expected to follow such a story.

The Saint Emperor seemed to understand his confusion.

"It is unexpected, right? In normal cases, when an individual becomes disillusioned by reality, they lash out in anger or despair. I felt neither. No, I do not think I am capable of those feelings in the first place. When I looked at the cruel and cold world I was born into, I found it unamusing, and I did not wish for it to stay that way."

"When the first generation that was born alongside me was driven out of the universe they attacked, I watched. When the second followed and achieved victory, I watched. When the third, fourth, fifth, sixth, and the rest came, I watched."

"It was interesting to see how people grew. Whether it be those in the universe or those from the growing Abyss, they always grew in ways I never expected. However, at a certain point, it became stale."

"Regardless of their growth, it always followed the same pattern. Regardless of how the situation intensified, I could see how it would conclude."

"So I created a motivation that allowed me to remain alive."

That was how the Saint Emperor spent the first few hundred thousand years of his life. He was an observer just like the Ancient Sovereign, but he did not have the same perception of space and time that allowed him to endure the time.



It became monotonous, and it almost drove him insane.

No, it truly did drive him insane, but he wasn't capable of feeling those emotions, so that insanity became a cold, calculative instinct that instilled itself in his mind.

"I began to intervene from that point forth."

Every time the Nox returned to the universe for war, every time they were reborn, he dipped his hand into those processes to change them even a little from their predetermined path.

"It was difficult at the beginning. I did not have influence, and though my power grew, as I did not focus on it, it was shallow in nature. Despite my attempts, I was met with failure and lackluster results."

The Saint Emperor shook his head regretfully.

"When I understood what I needed to truly change fate, I began to train with all my heart. It was then that I found 'that' force."

Damien's eyes narrowed.

He was surely talking about the Void.

"The Dark God's Seed, as it had been termed by our people. It was assumed to be the power of a higher being, and though I only encountered it once, it fascinated me. I was enlightened by its vastness. I began to chase it. And my power began to reflect it." "I cannot remember when I became unrivaled, but that was the turning point in my power."

His story still seemed pointless, but Damien listened anyway.

He was learning more about this enigmatic existence. If nothing else, the mystery behind this confusing man was starting to be unearthed.

It was oddly fulfilling to see the gaps fill themselves in, but it was also making the Saint Emperor more confusing.

"Almost one billion years of life, can I simplify it into a single conversation? The short answer is no."

"However, you must understand. As I tried to satiate my desire, the universe began revolving around me. As I chased 'that power,' I developed an obsession none could understand."

"I became a revered existence, and my ego became something justified. I became a god amongst mortals, and I treated the universe as my plaything."

"It was amusing. It was enjoyable to watch people dance as I willed them to. It was enjoyable to see how their actions were influenced by my presence."

The Saint Emperor's words were spilling out faster. His emotions were intensifying genuinely for the first time in an untold number of years. This was not a facade like everything else he showed, but the true self that he hid behind the veil.

"Everything belonged to me. Everything except the thing I truly desired."

His voice began to shake.

"I was the main character of the story I wrote through my actions, and as that story became the history of the world, I became the main character of existence."

His eyes locked with Damien's.

"Or, that was what I believed. Until I met you."

## Chapter 1304 Saint Emperor [2]

"Damien Void, you were an anomaly."

The Saint Emperor skipped countless hundreds of millions of years of his story and entered the current era.

"I first became aware of your existence when the Fifth Primal Sovereign died and watched you from then. Our meeting on Calypto was entirely calculated by me, because I could no longer watch. I wanted to interact with you."

Those words were scarier than he made them out to be. A man who had been watching him for several years, a man who could so perfectly understand the flow of the universe that he set up the entire invasion of Eden as a stage to meet Damien.

That was the man the Saint Emperor was.

"You exceeded all my expectations. When I finally saw you, I could not believe my eyes. You truly held that power I'd been powerlessly chasing for eons. You were someone blessed beyond belief, a man who was destined for greatness."

"I craved your power. I believed that once I plundered what you had, I would become whole and achieve the fate I decided for myself."

"I influenced everything. All of your conflicts from that point forward had a hint of my hand in them. Whether it be the Black Dragon Clan or Immortal Blood Asura, I made sure they would target you and serve as stepping stones for your growth, so that one day, you would become worthy of me."

"Life had become dull. Even influencing the world had become dull. I led countless universes to their destruction and raised countless others up. I allowed the Nox to become a race somewhat worthy of my name and watched as their influence outdid the universe in every way, yet, it was all meaningless before you."

"That day finally came on Al'Katra. After you magnificently utilized the foreign material and caused a scene of myths and legends, I finally couldn't hold back anymore. I killed you that day, so I could finally harvest the seed I'd been ripening for so many decades!"

The Saint Emperor clenched his fist until his palm bled.

"However, I was wrong. For the first time in my life, I was wrong. I did not gain anything from that day. I did not steal anything, and as we see now, I did not even succeed in killing you."

"It was devastating. What was I to do? The fate I set for myself, my position as the main character, it all came crashing down when rumors of your appearance here spread."

"I couldn't recover. I spent the past years on the Ancient Battlefield trying to find the path forward to no avail. And then, you ascended and came to me. You killed the enemies I prepared for you, you killed those I did not expect you to kill, and you grew past what I ever believed possible. Once I understood that your fangs were bared in my direction, I came to a realization."

The Saint Emperor's slitted eyes widened subtly.

"Do you understand what you mean to me, Damien Void? Do you understand how profound of an impact your presence has on my life?"

"You are my everything! After I met you, this boring existence gained light. My days were filled with amusement, and a drive I had never felt before filled my entire being. It was all because of you. You are my reason for living, and finding you was the reason I stayed alive for so long."

"How did I surpass the limitations of my lifespan? Even I do not know! Even I have no idea why I have been able to accomplish everything I have! But it must be you! You, who embodies everything I've ever strived for, you who carries the will of 'that' force, you are my everything! You are my reason for living!"

"Therefore, I have eagerly been awaiting this meeting. I have eagerly been awaiting the moment I could face you in all your glory. All the effort I put in, all the actions I took, you are the proof that they were worth every second!"

"..."

Damien was speechless.

"So..."

He gathered his thoughts as he tried to rationalize what he'd just heard.

"You spent hundreds of millions of years destroying countless quintillions of lives, causing endless suffering, and ruining the universe...just because you were bored?"

"You tried to ruin my life, you killed so many innocent people, including some whom I cared for...just because it was amusing to you?"

"Were you expecting something more? If it helps you rationalize, you can consider it my greed as well."

No, it wasn't greed at all.

That "greed" was just a byproduct.

And yes, Damien did expect something more.

He subconsciously believed the Saint Emperor to be someone with grand ambitions, someone who could not be predicted by the likes of regular people.

He never showed his true intentions, he never showed his true emotions, he never showed his true allegiance, and he never seemed to be set back by anything that happened.

Someone like him was too unbelievably strange for his motivation to be so simple.

But as Damien thought about it, he couldn't deny that it made sense.

His true intentions didn't exist. He was just writing the story that felt most amusing to him. His true emotions were dulled as he drowned in the constant pursuit of entertainment, only appearing at climactic times like this. He held no allegiance. He would aid any and all sides in a conflict to bring it to its greatest potential. And he was never set back by anything. No matter what the outcome was, he enjoyed it.

Because if it was an outcome he didn't expect, didn't that make things even more fun for him?

Boredom.

It was the curse of immortality.

One with a mind that perceived reality like a regular human being could not stand the true expanse of time. That mind would be corroded and ruined, turned into something that had the ability to cope.

The Saint Emperor's answer lay in his entertainment. Because of it, he was able to properly adjust to his immortality, and because of it, he did not waver no matter how much time passed.

All because he was bored, he destroyed an uncountable number of fates and turned the universe into a setting of his imagination.

It could be said that history as everyone knew it was nothing more than a story of the Saint Emperor's creation.

It was horrific. It was almost pathetic. Damien couldn't fathom it at all.

The Saint Emperor threw away reality. He didn't care about his strange origins, he didn't care about his strange power, he didn't care about the "how" or "why" that led to him becoming who he was today.

He only cared for the "story."

For that story, he committed atrocities. For that story, he groomed the Saint King from young and tried to kill him when he became useless. For the story, he killed Damien.

How did a being become like this?

He was so twisted that even he didn't realize it. His insanity never manifested like this, but because of Damien's existence, all of that insanity was concentrated in a single place and finally had the chance to burst.

Damien was his obsession. To be exact, the Void was his obsession, and Damien became the entertainment he could draw from that magisterial entity.

It was genuinely incomprehensible.

But maybe that was because of Damien's youth.

If he experienced eternity, would he be the same?

Would he view all things as nothing more than a game for him to play? Would he view life as something so meaningless that he could toy with it as he pleased?

He didn't know.

He couldn't understand the Saint Emperor no matter how much he tried.

'No, that's wrong.'

He didn't want to accept it.

Because it was so irrational, he didn't want to understand it.

But Damien was not that kind of person.

He felt a stifling emotion in his soul. His chest felt heavy, almost suffocatingly so as he tried to deny it.

But...

'...I understand him.'

No matter how much he tried to refuse it, he understood.

All that irrationality, all that selfishness, all that insanity, he understood it, and though he didn't respect it, he couldn't deny the Saint Emperor's path.

For that man, this was the way he lived. This was the motivation he built after surviving for so long, and this was the meaning of his existence.

He didn't agree with it.

But that wasn't something he could discredit.

Didn't it get him so far? The Saint Emperor was the person he was today because of all those terrible qualities.

And that person...

'...is the same as me.'

They differed in so many ways, but at their cores, they were the same.



They both desired absolute freedom from fate and control, they both wanted to be the controllers of everything, they both wanted to see the end of this long and lonely path, they both internalized their insanity for the sake of survival...

The Saint Emperor was a picture of a potential future, one that Damien absolutely wanted to avoid.

But that was the truth. Acceptance eventually swallowed his denial, and frankly...

He hated it.

Chapter 1305 Saint Emperor [3]

The more he thought about it, the less he could stand it.

The Saint Emperor looked like he had plenty left to say, but Damien didn't want to hear it.

As the man opened his mouth to speak again, his eyes gleaming with an unknown emotion, Damien punched out.

Partial Existence Law covered his fist and empowered his attack, directly targeting the Saint Emperor's "existence" rather than his physical traits.

BANG!

"Hahaha, what happened?" The Saint Emperor asked, casually dodging the impact.

"Shut up."

Damien didn't entertain him.

He entered combat mode, blocking everything out but his desire to kill.

His single fist turned into a barrage. His arms moved so fast they looked like they weren't moving at all, but countless impacts crushed heaven and earth in a way that made them impossible to ignore.

The Saint Emperor took a few light steps backward for every punch. He didn't try to attack back, but merely dodged and parried everything Damien threw at him.

"Are you angry? Why? Did I offend you in some way?"

His words were filled with sarcasm. Damien's eyes were hard and not showing much emotion, but the Saint Emperor read him like an open book.

It was clear he was finding enjoyment in Damien's current mental state.

However, Damien didn't want to entertain him actively. He used his fists because he wanted to feel the impact as he struck that man, but no matter how many times he swung or how much technique he used to try and bait his opponent, the Saint Emperor didn't get hit even once.

"Did you think you could kill me with something like this? Have you forgotten who I am? Or are you merely denying reality?"

Someone who'd lived for almost a billion years had experienced more combat than Damien could ever imagine. Technique and skill meant nothing to him, because even if he didn't actively try, the experience accumulated over such a vast timespan made him untouchable.

"Tch."

Damien clicked his tongue and stepped back, retreating a few dozen meters.

He transmuted his mana into that of Spacetime and tried to manipulate the environment to his advantage, but once again, the Saint Emperor took a stance of parrying.

Space twisted in Damien's image, but in the next second, it was twisted back by the Saint Emperor's manipulation.

"Haven't I already told you? I have worked for eons to make that power mine. Perhaps I never reached it, but you have not either!"

Unlike Damien, the Saint Emperor had no connection to the Void. He used his own grit and his long lifetime to break down its components and slowly understand them all.

Those concepts like Nonexistence were inaccessible to him, but of the laws existing in reality, which one had he not comprehended?

Space and time were merely two from a pool of thousands. If it was just about manipulating them, he had skill that might've even usurped Damien!

He kept trying nonetheless.

Damien wasn't planning to give the Saint Emperor a chance to counterattack even if he had no plans of doing so.

If his most confident law didn't work, he just had to use others.

He started with Elemental, the first law he ever saw the Saint Emperor utilize.

He threw down cold ice and quickly heated it up with flames, creating a massive pressure explosion. He used the wind to exacerbate that impact, and caused earthquakes that supported the terrifying shockwave.

He used metal and lightning together, forcing the Saint Emperor to endure lightning strikes empowered by conductors. He used light and darkness to manipulate the environment and shoot a monstrous number of projectiles.

Yet, once again, he was outdone.

'Dammit!'

His rage grew with everything the Saint Emperor did. Every time he countered easily, every time he used an element better than him, every time he smiled as if he knew everything, the suffocating feeling in Damien's chest grew worse.

"You must have realized it," the Saint Emperor said giddily.

"You must have understood!"

Flash!

He was directly before Damien in the same instant his words fell.

"You and I..." he began, spreading his arms wide.

"...are perfectly the same!"

""That' force was my original reason for finding you, that is true! However, it is you! You who embodies my will so perfectly, you who can understand me, you are the one I became so obsessed with! You, Damien Void, are the most perfect character in this universe, the one who gives me hope!"

"Shut up!"

BOOOOOM!

Damien's Divine Energy gushed out like a river through a broken dam. The entire environment was reshaped, the entire world was rebuilt with laws of his choosing.

He didn't need to be told.

He knew it well himself.

But it didn't matter.

'Why?!'

He understood the truth, but—

'—why does it have to be someone like him?!'

He had met so many people in his life, some bad and some good. He had seen many things and found many seniors and comrades he could relate to.

So why did the one he could understand most perfectly have to be this man?!

Even if it was just for a second, why could he see himself taking the same path as the Saint Emperor given the same circumstances?!

Even he was like that at the beginning.

When he first escaped the First Dungeon, he lived his life in search of entertainment to quell his insanity.

Everything he did until he met Alaric Alfheim and truly started to grow was just a means to make his life just a little bit more entertaining, to make existence less bland after leaving that hellish environment he grew up in.

What if he never met the seniors who guided him along his path?

What if he never had Rose, Elena, and Ruyue who allowed him to find himself?

What if he was alone in the darkness of the Abyss and enlightened to the ugly truth of his life, forced to find a way forward on his own?

How could he say he wouldn't do the exact same thing as the Saint Emperor?!

"DAMMIT!"

He hated it.

He hated it so much.

His hatred wanted him to kill this man and erase his presence from his life entirely.

But...

"Tell me, Damien Void. Why are you smiling?"

The Saint Emperor's words...

Damien put his hand up to his mouth.

There was a grin, a mad and wild grin he hadn't grinned in so long.

That grin was plastered across his face, those flames of battle were alit in his eyes.

He couldn't control it at all.

He couldn't deny reality.

"FUCK!"

...it was fun.

Fighting the Saint Emperor was so entertaining he couldn't stop himself from enjoying it.

This man was the only one in the entire universe who'd been able to properly match him. He wasn't lacking in any way, and Damien was able to fight to his full potential like he'd never done before.

This was a man who would've been his closest confidant if they were on the same side.

Yet, they were standing here as irreconcilable enemies, and that wasn't something that would ever change no matter how much time passed or how much Damien changed.

This twisted feeling, this twisted enjoyment, Damien couldn't stand it.

But at the same time, he loved it.

"Damien Void, do not deny it any longer. Just as much as I am obsessed with you..."

The Saint Emperor moved again, closing the distance between them in an instant with the same mad and wild grin.

"...you are obsessed with me too."

## Chapter 1306 Saint Emperor [4]

"Existence" had always been important to Damien. He worked so much to solidify his sense of identity, and once he'd defined it, he did everything he could to protect it, even in death.

So when he met the Saint Emperor, he tried to see through that man's existence.

It was impossible at first. His eyes couldn't penetrate the almost billion-year-old defense he'd put in place, but as he told his story, his "existence" became clearer to Damien.

And what he saw...was himself.

Deep within the Saint Emperor was an image of Damien.

This wasn't a manifestation of his feelings or their similarity, but entirely the Saint Emperor's doing.

He wasn't lying or exaggerating. He wasn't spouting nonsense in his insanity.

Everything the Saint Emperor had, everything he desired, everything he represented or embodied...all revolved around Damien.

It was unsettling.

The Saint Emperor's usual irregularity could be put aside for a second. Everything he did before he took interest in Damien could be disregarded.

How could he possibly have an "existence" like this?

What did Damien mean for him to change his whole identity for his sake?

Damien couldn't understand it.



But he did realize that their connection was far deeper than he originally thought.

The Saint Emperor did one-sidedly control a lot of the conflicts he faced in this life. He did have an obsession that couldn't be explained easily.

But just now, the Saint Emperor said something that struck Damien's soul.

"Just as I am obsessed with you, you are obsessed with me."

Damien's life...he never saw the Saint Emperor as the meaning to his existence.

However, if he took into consideration the hidden hand that moved so many things around him...

Then, for the longest time, Damien had been chasing the Saint Emperor with his eyes closed, blind to the truth.

It was even more infuriating. Damien's distaste for others controlling his life was extremely clear by now, and the fact that a large portion of his life had fallen under someone's control was unacceptable.

Eventually, Damien did leave the Saint Emperor's reach. The Saint Emperor definitely didn't expect Damien to grow as he did, just like Dante couldn't predict Damien's growth.

The problem was, unlike Dante who couldn't directly interfere in a path he set up long ago, the Saint Emperor was able to adapt to Damien's growth rate and change his own plans, regaining a hold on him.

Behind the scenes, there had been a constant battle of push and pull between Damien and the Saint Emperor that led up to this moment.

The Saint Emperor had been watching it from above, and his excitement and madness could be explained by his anticipation.

However, Damien was within it, only finding out now. All his negative emotion was fueled by the fact that this unknown battle was only becoming clear when it was reaching its end, the fact that, if the Saint Emperor truly desired it, he could've absolutely torn apart everything Damien cared for.

Whether it be his wives, his friends, his allies, his worlds...

How could he protect them from an unknown enemy that had comprehended all aspects of the universe?

But even then, that was only half of it.

That animosity conflicted with another feeling in his soul, one he did not accept in any way, shape, or form.

It was understanding.

As mentioned prior, Damien completely understood the Saint Emperor.

As a man sensitive to time after gaining the ability to manipulate it, he understood that the future the Saint Emperor symbolized wasn't just potential, but might've already happened.

Damien could turn back time. Even if it was only for a second, he had the ability to do so.

He always wondered how it worked. Since the time he rewound was localized, did it superimpose on the current timeline? Or was a separate timeline created to accommodate his actions?

The existence of a split timeline couldn't be ignored, because when Spacetime first presented itself to him, it did so as a river.

Streams flowed into rivers, and rivers flowed into the ocean. If this analogy was translated into terms related to Spacetime, who was Damien to say there weren't already countless possible futures that he wasn't able to avoid?

How could he say that he was the "only" Damien Void?

Until he became a being space and time couldn't contain, he had no right to say that.

Perhaps it was an unnecessary worry. Perhaps he was just thinking nonsensically and allowing those imaginary futures to affect his mind.

Yet, it didn't feel that way to him.

It felt like...

He couldn't explain it.

When he looked at the Saint Emperor, he felt pity.

He felt pity and understanding that pushed back against his hatred.

He wanted to hate the Saint Emperor, but in the very core of his being, he could not hate the man.

That feeling frustrated him and made him feel incredible discomfort, and with no way to release these emotions, they manifested as rage.

And so, the two of them continued to fight.

The Saint Emperor didn't speak more, and Damien didn't entertain him either.

They allowed their laws to mingle. They allowed their very existences to clash against each other.

They were irreconcilable, but they found enjoyment in battling each other.

Because just as much as the Saint Emperor had never met someone who could understand him like so, Damien had never met someone like the Saint Emperor.

There wasn't a person in existence who could stand up to him like this. There wasn't someone who could make him feel such strong hostility.

His enemies were below him.

To Damien, the Saint Emperor was perfect. He was a perfect end to the chronicles he created in the lower universe, the perfect enemy to mark the beginning of the next part of his story.

He wanted to enjoy this no matter what his emotions told him.

It was convoluted.

It was such a twisted bundle of emotions that Damien stopped thinking about it altogether.

He was going to defeat this man and validate all his efforts until now. He was going to take everything this man had and reach a point where nothing could inhibit him anymore.

And the Saint Emperor seemed to hold the same feeling.

He countered Damien with only the forces Damien used. When he attacked, Damien replied in kind.

As they clashed and fought, they both reached new understandings and grew. As they grew, they used those new comprehensions to fight, which promoted even further growth.

Rather than a fight between enemies, it started to feel more like a spar between old friends.

Old friends that hated each other to the bone.

Damien was enamored by their battle.

Partial Existence Law in its current form couldn't defeat the Saint Emperor.

He'd already activated his transformations to enhance his nigh immortal body to a new level. His bloodlines were raging in full force to support everything he did.

Whether it was the laws he already got used to, or the ones he hadn't used yet gained access to after tethering the fundamental laws, he tried to use them all.

As his proficiency grew, something in his soul became active too.

"Azure" started to move.

And slowly but surely, Damien's existence was becoming more complete.

Chapter 1307 Saint Emperor [5]

Fighting.

It used to be a thing of joy for Damien.

Tip-toeing on the tightrope of death, knowing his life could slip out of his control at any moment, that feeling used to excite him more than anything else.

When he grew out of his insanity, he still kept his love for battle, but its meaning changed. Instead of a joy, it became a necessity.

He fought with purpose, so that he could accomplish whatever he needed to accomplish at that time. He also fought for survival, purely trying to live as countless threats tried to make sure he didn't.

These motivations dulled his joy, because he no longer had the leeway to have such lighthearted thoughts.

Such was the burden of adulthood. He was no longer a youth who could do whatever he wanted with his life. He didn't have something like a support system that could cover his mistakes for him.

So Damien lost the joy of fighting. He instead found joy in growing stronger, in exploring the unknown, and in the people around him.

Right now, he found that the long-lost feeling was returning.

It was different, though.

The joy he felt fighting the Saint Emperor wasn't a matter of life and death. The fact that his life was on the line didn't truly bother him or even gain prevalence as a thought in his mind. It was just granted considering his position.

This joy didn't come from the fight itself, but from everything else involved with it.

In a sense, this fight was less physical and more ethereal.

Damien and the Saint Emperor were those kinds of people. They had almost the exact same Divinity, and their power level was equally matched too.

The Saint Emperor had more skill, but Damien's raw power and the purity of his laws allowed him to match the man on equal footing.

There was no real way for them to settle their conflict if they kept fighting like this.

But they did so anyway.

They could've solved this with Sacred Combat. If they chose that method, Damien would've automatically won.

After all, Damien's Divinity was what the Saint Emperor's Divinity tried to imitate. Purely in terms of conceptual league, Damien overpowered his enemy in every aspect.

So why didn't he try to initiate Sacred Combat? Why did neither he nor the Saint Emperor even consider it?

That reason was the joy in their fight.

As they compared their beliefs and ideals, as they clashed with the parts of themselves that were parallel and those that made them diverge, they felt something they'd never felt before.

True combat against an equal in every way.

They didn't want to end this so easily and lost that feeling. The only way for this fight to end was for one of them to run out of steam first.

Whether that be Divine Energy, stamina, or something else was still unknown at this point, but it didn't matter.

Days went by as they fought. Those days became weeks, and weeks became months.

They didn't stall for a single second or even dream of stopping. 24 hours of every day were spent in battle, and time soon became an inconsequential thing for them.

It was fun.

For the first few months, they focused on Elemental Law. Damien's proficiency was good, and he was far more versatile, able to use every element available.

Meanwhile, the Saint Emperor sacrificed his versatility and focused on raising his skill with the five most foundational elements.

Which of their methods was better?

With versatility, Damien could respond to any situation well. He didn't have as much power, but the power he did possess was enough when the elements were used in conjunction with each other and perfectly fused according to the concept of duality.

The Saint Emperor couldn't combine his elements. He lacked the binding force of the Void that stabilized them and rid them of their independence.

However, he was far better at controlling them. He could use fire in ways that resembled water or earth, and he could manipulate air as if it had the properties of fire or wood.

It was a mystical thing to accomplish without any support, and Damien learned a great deal from it.

He still believed his method superior, especially since his final aim was to control every aspect of existence, but the Saint Emperor's control allowed him to refine his own and perfect elemental fusion in ways he'd never believed possible.

Next came a time spent on Samsara.

This one was completely Damien's victory. As someone who'd experienced the Wheel of Samsara personally, he reached a level of comprehension of this law that couldn't be matched by anyone.



The Saint Emperor was faced with surprise as he was thoroughly surpassed by someone who'd lived for less than a fraction of the time he had.

But it also made sense. The Samsara he'd comprehended came from the lives and deaths of those who existed and ceased existing during his lifetime. He's watched them for eons and come to the perspective he held, but as someone who never experienced life nor death, he couldn't quite reach a standard of perfection.

They only spent a month on this aspect of the fight before the Saint Emperor changed their method to Spacetime.

And surprisingly, while it was Damien's main specialty, they spent over a year on this fight.

They flashed through the desolate earth, moving in and out of the spatial layers. They moved back and forth through time, treating its rivers as nothing more than a means of transportation.

Damien was grinning the whole time.

The Saint Emperor also focused on Spacetime more than most.

He couldn't just use space in the ways Damien could, he expanded on the concept to a new level.

He could use the concept of distance to create entire galaxies in a mere few meters' worth of space and use them as attacks. The explosions were capable of exuding as much force as a true exploding galaxy, a mystical phenomenon that even Demigods couldn't survive easily.

Naturally, Damien was different. He also showcased the height of his laws, severing Spacetime and shifting its place in reality as he pleased.

The Saint Emperor's explosive force was surely powerful, but as Damien altered the layers of space and time to displace its coordinates, it couldn't even reach him, which made it irrelevant.

He was learning.

Every time they exchanged attacks, he learned more.

The elements of Existence Law that remained tethered yet separated slowly started to come together, closing the distance between each other.

At the end of the process, he'd reach his goal, far earlier than he ever expected to.

And though both of them had the ability to, as years passed, neither replenished their mana.

It was a matter of honor, or maybe it was just a risk they took to maintain the enjoyment of their fight.

After all, they were almost there.

Once they compared Creation and Destruction, the time would come to choose a final winner.

Damien gritted his teeth.

He was feeling more complex with the passing of time, but he decided to push it down so he could focus.

Why was the Saint Emperor doing this?

Yes, Damien was supposedly everything to him, but still...

The Saint Emperor was someone who wanted to become the main character of his own story. He manipulated the universe so he could create a setting for that story, and he manipulated its people to form a plot that could entertain him.

The last step was here. The second he killed Damien and came out on top, he would take his position as the main character and rule existence as its sovereign.

So...

Why was he doing this?

Why was he teaching Damien?

It was impossible to understand.

The only way to get that answer was to win.

Damien's eyes hardened.

'It's been fun, but...'

He sighed to himself.

'...from now on, I'll be serious.'

Chapter 1308 Saint Emperor [6]

At the end of the day, this was also that type of battle.

Damien had the subtle urge to keep the Saint Emperor alive, not due to any misguided sympathy, but from sheer curiosity. This kind of character couldn't easily be created, and he wanted to explore the true depths of this strange man to satisfy his own interest.

However, he was a man with responsibilities.

He had a duty to end the Saint Emperor and usher in a new era for the universe.

And while he did have that slight urge, his desire to finally end this and move on was far greater.

Therefore, this was also a battle Damien needed to win no matter what.

Creation, Destruction, and a final round where they used everything they could to come out on top.

The Saint Emperor was acting strangely, but even he didn't want to just die. He wasn't making it easy for Damien to win in the slightest.

Until now, he'd used just enough force to match his opponent, but the control he exercised while doing so made it clear he had much more power that he kept hidden within him.

The second Damien stopped playing by his rhythm, he would surely bring that power out.

That time was now.

Damien summoned the forces of Creation and Destruction on his palms as he looked at the enemy.

The Ancient Battlefield, or rather, this area outside its bounds was completely wrecked already. The mountains and dense earth were torn to shreds, and the atmosphere through which they clashed was already showing signs of collapsing.

There wasn't much time left before the entire area was swallowed by the chaotic void, and until then, they would fight.

"Huu..."

Damien took a deep breath.

'Focus.'

He put aside everything else.

All those useless feelings that were dredged up as he faced the Saint Emperor were thrown away.

The Saint Emperor was the reason they came into being. He was doing everything he could to perturb Damien's mental state, but Damien was the one who allowed those emotions to exist.

As long as he disallowed their presence, such feelings wouldn't invade his mind anymore.

'Feeling them was like understanding him. My curiosity made me want to keep them, but if I want to win this battle, understanding him is meaningless.'

There was no need to sympathize with the enemy. Everybody had their own story. In most cases, the people he fought had their own desires and motivations and couldn't be considered evil one-sidedly.

The Saint Emperor was the same.

No matter who he was or how similar he was to Damien, no matter what value he held elsewhere, in this moment, here and now, he was an enemy to be killed.

That was all Damien needed to know.

He closed his eyes for a second and stabilized his mind.

When he opened them again, he was already shooting forward.

Creation and Destruction were his newest attainments, but he felt far more adept at them than others.

After all, despite being complex, they were the easiest for him to use.

He had a foundation built by the laws that made up these two supreme concepts, so when it came to using them in their true form, he really only needed to focus on their most basic definitions.

To create and to destroy.

He began with Creation.

As Iris did, Damien had to learn how to use this law offensively.

There was the obvious method of controlling constructs he created, but that was too plain for him.

Damien wanted to make an attack style worthy of the Law of Creation.

Iris took the route of energy creation. Not only did she create different forms of energy like Universal Law, she learned to create her own reality to influence at will.

The path Damien chose was different.

The best way to describe it was "realization."

He was a man with quite the imagination, and due to his upbringing in a mortal world like Earth, that imagination was filled with things that didn't exist even in this fantastical world.

The path he took in Creation was bringing these imaginary concepts to reality.

And on top of that, using his legacy as a Celestial, Universe Creation was something he wanted to try his hand at.

He saw the Saint Emperor do it earlier. All he had to do was mimic it.

Focusing his energy on the Divine Energy in his body, he infused his will into Creation Law and brought his imagination to reality.

VOOOOOM!

A shadow blanketed the entire battlefield.

"Oho...?"

The Saint Emperor made a sound of interest as he looked up.

It was hard to see it in its entirety. It simply did not fit on the plane they were on and was forced to exist beyond it.

But its pressure could be felt clearly.

"Aim."

Damien gave the command.

A strange sound whirled through the atmosphere, like a heap of matter being collected into a single, minuscule point.

"Is this your declaration of war?" The Saint Emperor asked, the expression in his eyes much colder than before.

Damien nodded.

"This battle must end somehow. There doesn't exist a universe where you and I can coexist."

"Haa, so be it, then. I shall also cease my mercy."

The Saint Emperor spoke as if this was a foregone conclusion, something that was bound to happen.

And since Damien was no longer holding back, neither would he.

The Saint Emperor grinned.

"Are you going to—"

"Fire."

Damien didn't plan to listen.

With his word, the massive structure in the air let loose the energy it concentrated.

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

A massive beam of Divine Energy with the thickness of a building struck down from the heavens. It was followed by tens of others of similar size and energy, covering the entire battlefield in a rain of destruction.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The Saint Emperor was essentially illusory. He flashed in and out of the spatial layers, in and out of reality as he avoided each and every pillar of light.



"Rise."

Damien gave another command, and the earth followed his will.

He summoned an earth spirit, or rather, he brought it into being.

He gave life to the world itself and used Creation to give it form. The spirit of the Ancient Battlefield that he birthed rose from the ground amidst the raining light and slammed its fists through the air.

BOOOOOOOOOM!

The Saint Emperor couldn't avoid it.

He was powerful and extremely agile, but avoiding such a concentrated impact without being struck by an energy beam was impossible.

Damien made sure of it.

The Saint Emperor's body was sent flying, but no blood leaked. The impact was superficial at best.

"Attack."

After all, what Damien created wasn't just a golem.

He imbued spirituality into the plane itself.

The golem body it used was just a manifestation of its power. In reality, the entire Ancient Battlefield became Damien's weapon.

BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!

The earth flowed like the waves of a tsunami, and from those waves, countless spikes and fists jutted out to attack the Saint Emperor wherever he passed.

"Very good!"

The Saint Emperor shouted out happily.

"You are learning well, however..."

He spread his arms, taking the incoming wave's energy with his body alone.

"...you have yet to reach my level, Damien Void!"

VOOOOOOOOOOOM!

The Saint Emperor's Law of Creation manifested in reality.

"This is the answer to everything you have been questioning," he said as he worked.

His aura flared out, twisting reality with its pressure.

The earthen tsunami and energy beams were blown away as it spread. They were incinerated by its light, as if the stage was completely focusing on the Saint Emperor alone.

"Experience it, Damien Void."

"Something" appeared in the sky.

"Experience the weight of your existence."

"..."

Damien was left speechless once again.

This...

'...is something like that even possible?!'

Chapter 1309 Saint Emperor [7]

Creation and Destruction were different from other laws.

Due to their vastness, they had rudimentary consciousness that allowed them to pick and choose who had the right to wield them.

It was impossible to forcefully wield them. No matter how much one tried, one wouldn't be able to achieve results worth the effort.

The Saint Emperor...he both met the qualifications for both elements and didn't.

His insanity and lack of identity made him heavily unequaled for utilizing their full potential, and as a person, he was neither close to Creation nor Destruction.

However, during his lifetime, he'd spent countless millions of years both aiding with the creation of different societies and their destruction.

That was how he lived for the sake of entertainment.

The two laws were unbiased. Laws didn't differentiate between good and evil, worthy and unworthy. As long as one had the qualifications, it was entirely possible to use them no matter the morals one lived by.

The Saint Emperor didn't begin as someone either eleven would have accepted.

When he first achieved them, he forcefully comprehended them and used them without gaining acknowledgment.

However, if there was one thing he had more than anyone else, it was time.

He intentionally raised both the Nox and the universal forces with his hidden hands for the sake of gaining acknowledgement from Creation.

He gave new societies life and fostered their growth, he created new religions that rose and fell, he built monuments and manmade wonders, and did countless acts aligned with the art of Creation.

And naturally, he led them all to their destruction. They were flawed to begin with, created with the purpose of being destroyed.

Eventually, the Saint Emperor gained control over the laws he wanted, but their form...

Their form was twisted beyond belief to match his person.

When he summoned Creation Law against Damien, it wasn't the pure and almost holy law he was used to.

It was convoluted, blood-red, and held energy that felt beyond foreign.

What the Saint Emperor summoned through Creation was something Damien never thought possible.

As he said, he created an embodiment of the "weight" of Damien's existence.

No, it was an embodiment of his identity.

A massive avatar, roughly ten kilometers tall, that had the appearance of an illusory Saint Emperor.

However, it also held qualities of Damien.

It was a mixture of their persons, and unlike the material law Damien utilized, it was wholly involved in the conceptual aspects of Creation.

"Damien Void, pay close attention," the Saint Emperor said.

The avatar stepped forward.

"Experience it, understand it, and overcome it."

VOOOOOOOOOOOM!

That step held great power. It did not affect reality in any way whatsoever, however, Damien felt an ethereal wave of energy push through his body.

"KHHH...!"

His mind immediately began to collapse. He was assaulted by memories from the Saint Emperor's life and memories from his own, which merged into a single stream of recollection that caused agonizing dissonance in Damien's mind.

VOOOOOOOOOOOM!

The avatar took another step.

This time, Damien faced himself.

His own Legend crashed down on his soul, this time outside of his control.

He felt what it was like to face him as a regular being.

And truly, he understood why he was so feared by those Demigods before he ascended.

He understood why they gave him titles like Divine Reaper.

Damien's Legend was massive.

He accomplished so many impossible tasks that if he gave one away to each of his friends, he could raise them all to Divine status with his own effort alone and still have enough left for him to maintain his own power.

His Legend was something a normal person could never experience in their life, especially in such a short period of a few decades.

Damien possessed this Divinity, so logically speaking, it shouldn't have been able to affect him greatly, but logic didn't apply to the Saint Emperor.

He "created" a mirror of that Legend, and when he added his own Legend into it, the newly formed creation was far beyond what Damien could handle.

His soul screamed in pain, but the Authority of Immortality made sure it wouldn't shatter.

The effect was beneficial, however, it also made his pain far worse.

After all, this was his own Legend. The pain was amplified to an extent no other attack could ever reach.

Damien gritted his teeth and endured it.

As the Saint Emperor said, he internalized the pain and tried to comprehend the processes behind this use of Creation Law.

Unlike Iris, Damien never spent the time to become close to Creation. He allowed its proficiency to be raised by its connection with Destruction and his Cosmic Rebirth, mainly using it in battle in the most basic way.

This was a level above creating energy.

This was truly manifesting concepts that had no place in reality, only existing in the mind and soul.

'It's a level close to genesis.'

If the Saint Emperor practiced this a bit more, he would likely gain the ability to truly create life.

VOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

The avatar stepped forward once more. It was only a single step away from Damien, and if it reached him, nothing good would come of it.

'I have to figure this out.'

The Saint Emperor watched him quietly.

He didn't have any intention to continue attacking, as if he was certain Damien would never be able to reach his level before the avatar reached him.

Damien used the full height of his comprehension, boosted to an extreme level by his Cosmic Rebirth.

He immediately found an opening.

'Right, I can already transmute energy to any form.'

His "energy" that had no name, one he'd prefer not to call Void Energy for the sake of his sanity, could transmute into any form of energy in existence.

He didn't use Divine Energy as a base, but turned his energy into it for the sake of utilizing something the universe could properly support.

If he used that process to understand how to "create" energy, then he could also find a way to manifest his thoughts.

'It's just like what I did before.'

Damien manifested his imagination, but he used material concepts to do so.

If he took away the last step and genuinely brought his imagination into reality...

VOOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

The avatar took its last step. It towered over Damien, raising its arm slowly.

Damien watched its hand come down on his head, but instead of dodging or trying to fight it...



He stood there and waited for it to strike him.

The impact was...

He couldn't explain it.

His soul shook. His mind was thrown into spiritual chaos. The forces in his body were enveloped by disorder.

But at the same time, he began to understand it.

'This avatar has nothing to do with "me."'

"Damien Void" had no presence within it.

'That is not me, but the reflection of me within the Saint Emperor.'

The confusion brought about by the avatar was caused by its ability to use his Legend, to manifest something the Saint Emperor shouldn't have had any access to.

However, when Damien felt the avatar's true attack, he grasped the truth.

This avatar was entirely the Saint Emperor's being. Those words about the "weight of his existence" were bait, meant to mislead him.

"The weight of my existence..."

Damien muttered the phrase.

To fight against something like this, no, to comprehend this concept, he had to manifest the true weight of his existence.

VOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

A new avatar came into being behind Damien.

It was not convoluted like the Saint Emperor's. It was not a strange mixture of forces that didn't make any sense. It did not embody chaos.

It was the true manifestation of a Legend, the Legend of Damien Void.

The Saint Emperor smiled. His expression was proud as he gazed at its domineering form.

"Good," he said, too quietly for Damien to hear.

"Grow like that, for only then can you survive your next chapter."

Chapter 1310 Saint Emperor [8]

The Manifestation of Law, an avatar that totally encompassed Damien as an individual and used his Divinity and Legend as a basis to manifest in the real plane.

It was an ability that should've been far beyond his caliber, something True Gods were able to create through their main laws, however, he managed to circumvent most of the troubles through the Saint Emperor's pressure and his use of Creation.

When that entity appeared in the world, it shattered the atmosphere with its presence. The Ancient Battlefield was thrown into disarray, and the shoddy avatar the Saint Emperor summoned, an imitation of the real thing, was dispersed by the weight of its existence.

Damien opened his eyes and gazed at it in wonder before turning back to the Saint Emperor.

"Shall we move on?" The Saint Emperor asked.

"..."

Damien thought about it for a second before nodding.

"Very well, however, don't think you'll be able to continue sitting on that throne. Destruction happens to be my specialty."

"Oh? I hope you can back those words with your actions."

"I hope you can too."

Damien dispersed the Manifestation of Law. It was a useful ability that could overpower most opponents, but the Saint Emperor wasn't one of them.

It was better to accept this piece of tutelage and continue their battle, so the eventual end would come sooner.

As the pure manifestation disappeared, Damien's body was wrapped in reddish-black energy.

The last clash was one of Creation. It didn't have much impact or extremity, since Creation was never a law like that.

It was calm, therefore, the clash between its forces, no matter how destructive they might have been, was equally calm.

However, Destruction was the complete opposite.

BANG!

Damien shot forward like a bolt of lightning and appeared before the Saint Emperor.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

He let loose a flurry of punches before the man could react before stepping back and flicking his wrist.

BOOOOOOOOOM!

Pure destruction filled the air. It was a mixture of several destructive laws that couldn't be described any other way.

The actual processes were drowned in chaos, and as long as the intent to destroy was present, anything was possible.

That was the nature of destruction.

A reddish-black cloud of energy rose through the atmosphere and enveloped the Saint Emperor, however, he was more than prepared.

BOOM!

His body mirrored Damien's, turning into a reddish-black flash as he escaped the cloud.

He moved his arm in a diagonal motion, and before Damien could react, space itself was cut in half.

The vacuum formed by the gash attempted to draw him in.

At first, he tried to resist the normal way, but that was impossible. This was the Ancient Battlefield. Just as space was far stronger here, the chaotic void existing beyond it was far more deadly.

'Destruction...'

That was the answer.

To sever concepts, to use Destruction to its full potential.

Damien mimicked the Saint Emperor's motions and cut diagonally through the air.

He didn't sever space, nor did he sever energy.

He severed the vacuum itself, destroying the "concept" that supported its existence.

"Hahaha, you are indeed skilled!"

The Saint Emperor applauded him as he approached.

He initiated a bout of close-range battle, showing expert skill in hand-to-hand combat.

His fists were blurry because of speed. He struck left and sent an uppercut, forcing Damien to dodge before revealing it was a feint to hide the true attack coming from below.

BANG! BANG! BANG!

Damien's body was assaulted with blunt impacts.

Each one had the power to puncture planets, and when they made contact, arcs of Destruction Law were passed through his body, running up his systems and attempting to cease their function.

Damien grinned.

'This kind of strategy won't work on me anymore.'

That was the benefit of the Void Physique superimposing on his physical body. All of his extraordinary systems, such as the Ananta Matrix and Mana Heart, were ingrained into his vessel. Their physical forms disappeared, but their effects remained.

The most the Saint Emperor could destroy was his physical system, his organs and other fleshy parts.

However, to even do that, he had to break through the subspaces that protected those organs first!

He'd done it once before. When he attacked Damien in the lower universe, he was able to directly punch through those defenses as if they didn't exist.

But they were on the same level now.

And Damien learned a lot from that experience.

His current internal defenses couldn't be broken so easily.

BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!

There was no way for the Saint Emperor to know all of this. He continued to assail Damien with punches and kicks, filling his body with foreign Destruction Mana.

And that was an opportunity for Damien.

There was no need to think about how to use Destruction, that much was true.

However, Damien did put some time into it.

Because to use it to its fullest potential, one needed to throw away what they knew about reality.

Destruction was a law birthed along with creation. If one excluded Existence and Nonexistence, which were only laws by technicality and stood as concepts above the concept of law, Destruction was half of the first law to ever exist.

It had the potential to alter reality with its power.

To use it purely in its most basic form, wasn't it a shame?

The question Damien asked himself was simple.

What did he want to destroy?

The answer was just as simple.

"Everything" that stood in his path.

Right now, that was the Saint Emperor.

And to destroy the Saint Emperor, he first had to destroy himself.

Reddish-black energy filled the air as the two of them clashed.

The plane could not hold their presence anymore. That was why they originally came to this place that shouldn't have existed, but even this place couldn't hold them.

Tears formed in space and time, in reality, and the chaotic void began to bare its fangs.

Damien let loose his energy to counterattack.

BOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

A massive gash formed in the space between him and the Saint Emperor and quickly spread for millions of miles in every direction.

The two of them retreated to get away from it before acting in tandem, using Destruction to eradicate the negative effects of that gash and charge at each other.

BOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

Their laws collided.

Damien aimed for the very core of the Saint Emperor's identity, the image of himself within the man.

However, what did the Saint Emperor aim for?

What did he want to destroy?

The answer...

"...is fate."

The Saint Emperor said it directly instead of making Damien ponder it.



"I want to destroy this twisted fate that made me who I am, the twisted fate that forced reality onto me and disallowed me from experiencing the story I created. I want to absolutely destroy anything and everything, but at the same time..."

"...what I want to destroy is completely different, something I am unable to explain in words."

BOOM!

His Destruction Law spread, and Damien experienced it.

Whatever it was that he wanted to destroy, his desire to do so was so extreme that it influenced Damien, who was actively suppressing his emotions.

"I don't know what that thing is, but..."

Damien put forth his own determination.

This clash would decide it.

Which of them was worthy of destroying the object of their desire, this clash would determine it.

And the other...

It didn't need to be said.

Damien concentrated his energy. Since the Saint Emperor was showing him something "real," something from the very core of his being, something nobody had ever had the opportunity to see before, he decided to do the same.

Everything Damien used to run from, everything deeply embedded in his psyche that changed him into a different person, everything negative that he rejected so he could become Absolute, Damien put those feelings, and the will to destroy them, into his attacks.

A battle where they bore their true selves to each other, where they could completely let loose the things they hid from others, that was what this battle had become.

And still, despite the passing of years and the end approaching soon, in their hearts, this battle had only just begun.