

## Void 1381

Chapter 1381 True Gods [4]

The boundary steles were close. Actually, he got closer to them as he went through the groups and saved everyone from Veritas.

After all, that was how the Forbidden Secret Realm was laid out.

The closer one was to the boundary stele, the more dangerous the environment around them became. The more talented people were naturally closer to it than the rest.

Celeste could be considered an exception, since she had the talent to approach far closer than someone like Romulus or Reva Veritas, but chose not to for her own reasons.

Nevertheless, at the current distance, only a few million kilometers stood between Damien and the steles.

The problem was, he wasn't alone.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The force of a God. Damien was feeling it personally now.

They never hit him directly, either because of his nimble movements or because they were corralling him in a certain direction, but just from the damage done to the surroundings as the two Straea Gods chased him through the realm was terrifying.

Massive, deep-rooted trees were torn out of the ground like they were made of paper, beasts were shredded by just being in the vicinity, and the earth was sundered to the point where it wouldn't be able to house life again for many eons to come.

Damien maintained his track to the boundary steles.

He didn't pay attention to anything going on behind him, whether it be the rampant mana or the incessant yelling of his enemies.

He was single-mindedly focusing on reaching the boundary steles.

BOOOOOOM!

A furious explosion rang out only a few feet away, pushing Damien in the other direction and burning the side of his body.

'Damn.'

He clicked his tongue and teleported, rapidly regaining his momentum.

'They aren't going all out.'

That was the first thing he noticed.

Unlike when they were fighting the Veritas Gods, these two Gods weren't using the entire capability their authority over law allowed.

Rather, they weren't using laws at all.

'Is it because I'm a Demigod, or is there something I don't know about at play?'

With the female God's hatred against him maximized to the fullest by his actions, there was no way she'd let him go easily.

Maybe she wanted him to suffer, but this wasn't the way to cause that suffering.

So why were they using mana without trying to suppress him through laws?

'Maybe their goal is the same as mine...?'

Damien dodged another mana explosion by a hair's breadth and teleported away, taking a moment to look at the wounds on his body.

If they wanted to corner him against the boundary stele, they were doing a great job of pushing him towards it.

'These wounds aren't too deep, but they're hard to heal. The Authority of Immortality that evolved from my natural healing and traits like Transcendent Regeneration can't get rid of them as they happen, so they're accumulating nicely.'

It was a weird way of thinking considering he was talking about his own body, but Damien was used to viewing himself objectively for the sake of research.

The Authority of Immortality was powerful. He'd seen its power firsthand in the years he spent as a mercenary for the Veritas Clan.

If the wound was made by a Demigod, no matter how powerful they were or what methods they used, it would heal in seconds.

Even a severed limb could be completely recreated and strengthened to its former capabilities before an enemy could attack a second time.

It was a monstrous Authority, but even it was having trouble against Godly Divine Energy.

Because, at the end of the day, even the Authority of Immortality was built on laws.

'Though their standing is probably pretty low amongst Gods, they still stand above all Laws.'

That was what it meant to be a God.

Their pursuit was quite severe, but it wasn't at a level Damien couldn't handle.

That was how it continued until they reached the boundary steles.

The massive wall that blocked off the majority of the Forbidden Secret Realm, a wall that even Gods couldn't break.

Damien wanted to test that theory.

He wanted to go beyond it.

And for that chance, he brought two Gods along with him to attack it.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Their mana pelted it mercilessly as Damien teleported across its surface. Despite his ability to flee being limited by its presence, the omnidirectional movement ability that teleportation allowed him wasn't something that could be inhibited because a single direction was blocked.

The two Straea Gods became more and more annoyed as Damien evaded their attempts to catch him, and by the time they reached this point in their chase, they were already using their Authority, which they held back from doing until now.

It was a shame, though.

Because Damien was still toying with them.

'It's a little funny.' He thought to himself.

'Considering their attack power, if any of these attacks hit me, I'd be out of commission long enough for them to capture me and do whatever they pleased. But that's only if they can hit me.'

This definitely wasn't the fullest extent of their capabilities.

Attacks like these were at the level of complexity that someone like Immortal Blood Asura could replicate, even if the power was far greater.

Where was that ability he saw earlier?

Where was the natural movement of ambient mana that supported each and every movement, the true terror of a God?

'Are they mocking me?'

Damien glanced over at the two.

Their expressions were twisted. Especially that woman. She wouldn't have such an expression on her face if she was just toying with him.

'Then, is that why they haven't been able to break the boundary stele until now?'

Maybe it wasn't a matter related to them in any way.

Maybe the boundary stele itself restricted a God's control, leaving them as what could basically be called overpowered Demigods.

If that was the case...

'...then it makes sense why they never managed to break the steles.'

If their power was that restricted, then breaking the steles would be a truly impressive feat.

'But if that's the case, then how am I supposed to get past it?'

Damien had no plan to resign. Every time he'd felt a calling like this, he'd encountered something that was monumental in his journey to power.

Damien had no plan to resign. Every time he'd felt a calling like this, he'd encountered something that was monumental in his journey to power.

He couldn't just leave it behind because the stele felt unbreakable.

'Hmm...'

It was troublesome since he had to focus most of his attention on dodging and evading, but he did have just a small piece of his consciousness focused on breaking through the wall.

'Oh, I could also do that!'

He thought they would become useless once he came to the Heavenly World, but this was the perfect situation, wasn't it?

While Damien held the attention of those two Gods, another figure quietly appeared on the ground below and pushed towards the boundary stele.

His flaming red hair stood out in the lush greenery, but within a second, he'd already hidden himself so he couldn't be sensed easily.

Plus, with his strange existence, he wouldn't be regarded in the perception of others as human unless they truly looked into his origin.

That man, Alexander, pressed his hand against the boundary stele and inserted his awareness into its surface.

He studied it using all his memories as Damien Void, and after almost an entire minute, he found a trace.

'That is...'

His eyes widened.

His main body's eyes widened as well.

It wasn't what he was expecting at all.

There was a trace of mana hidden in the steles. It was the secret behind their mysterious strength and purpose.

It was a trace of "Existence."

In a form that Damien had never seen before.

Chapter 1382 Stele [1]

'Existence?'

Damien focused most of his attention on Alexander's body when he found it.

His main body was moving with the bare minimum intelligence, using mainly its instincts to dodge and weave away from the Gods that were attacking him.

Naturally, if they challenged him in close combat, the situation would be different, but that was exactly the situation Damien was working hard to avoid.

He didn't just stay near the boundary stele.

The two Straea Gods realized their distanced attacks wouldn't hit pretty early. Once they had him cornered, the first thing they tried to do was get in close and stop him from teleporting.

However, Damien moved behind them and led the chase in a separate direction.

He needed them to keep their attention completely focused on him.

Alexander was already working through the boundary stele's mechanics to find a way past it, so his job was now to stop the two from realizing Alexander's presence.

There was no need to talk about the process.

Damien's awareness was great, and with teleportation supporting him, even Gods would be hard-pressed to catch him.

His movements had no pattern or direction, he was never inhibited by the environment, and his range wasn't something they could easily place their finger on.

Damien made sure of it. No matter how hard they tried, unless they had power so absolute he couldn't evade them, they couldn't catch him.

And from what they showed so far, he was confident they didn't.

'I'll call them low-rank Gods for now. At this level, they've pretty much just reached a point above Law, so in terms of control, they aren't nearly at the level they can express in the Heavenly God Plane.'



The Heavenly God Plane had a supportive environment that allowed a God to show anything and everything they could without restriction.

However, the real plane was different. It didn't directly restrict them, but the Heavenly Order stood above all beings and put them all under a blanket of its domain, which forced a God to do far more work to exhibit the same level of power.

Low-rank Gods couldn't overcome that domain. Perhaps it was due to the matters of soul Damien explored earlier, or perhaps it was something else, but the facts didn't change.

'As long as I don't let them hit me, they can't catch me.'

It wasn't like there was no danger. They were still Gods, at the end of the day.

Their Legends were great, their souls were great, their mana was great, and their laws were great. Damien was also great in his own way, but objectively speaking, they had more power than he did.

So he could only run and confuse them for as long as possible before they healed from their previous injuries and cornered him.

Before that happened, Alexander had to break past the boundary stele.

On that topic...

'This is...difficult.'

He was able to sense the trace almost instantly because he himself controlled Existence.

However, actually moving that trace was a different matter altogether.

What was the problem Damien was dealing with in the first place?

It was his inability to move Existence as he pleased.

So if the answer here was exactly that, what was he supposed to do?

'No matter how talented I am, it's impossible for me to find that method before my main body gets fucked.'

If so, he needed to find a workaround.

'From what I'm seeing, it's a pretty simple puzzle. More than anything else, people couldn't solve it because they tried to use brute force, but there's also the fact that they couldn't sense the presence of this puzzle in the first place.'

If someone before Damien could perceive what he was perceiving now, the boundary steles would've long been taken care of.

But since they couldn't, such a simple puzzle inhibited them for untold millennia.

'Still, is it possible to do this another way?'

He latched onto the trace of existence with his mana and tried to find a way to move it. It wasn't like an ordinary puzzle block, so this method naturally didn't work.

After that, he tried to move the environment around the trace of existence to change its relative position to the puzzle's exit point.

However, even that didn't work. Halfway through his trial, he lost control of the area and it reverted back to normal.

The third strategy he tried was the most blunt, but it also felt the most rational.

He poured Existence Law into the puzzle.

There was a route to pull the trace of existence out. When one made it to the end, the boundary stele would likely collapse and one would gain the trace of existence for themselves.

But since Damien couldn't do it, he filled the pathway with his own Existence Law, using pure quantity to overcome the puzzle mechanism.

As for its effectiveness...?

'It's definitely working.'

It didn't work immediately, but unlike his other attempts, the puzzle didn't force him to stop trying.

'Maybe because I just poured it all out, it doesn't count. If I just contain it to the pathway without letting it leak into the surrounding area...'

He worked tirelessly. The seconds passed extremely slowly, and within his mind, he saw the various changes that were taking place within the stele.

Controlling Existence. It was just as grand of a task as it sounded.

There was no way to take shortcuts to reach the final goal. Even now, as Damien used a shortcut to get past the puzzle, he still had to learn to at least somewhat bend existence to his will.

Alexander put his whole focus on the task to the point where his surroundings were drowned out. Damien, who stayed relatively in the vicinity, sent down a few clones to protect him as he maintained the attention of those two Gods.

The time had to be counted in seconds. Not even a minute had passed since they first reached the boundary stele, but each second was used to its fullest capabilities by every party involved.

'It's getting harder.'

The main reason Damien could lead them along like this was because the two Straea Gods were injured beforehand both by him and the Veritas Grand Elders.

But as the time passed, their injuries got less and less severe, and their attacks became more powerful.

'They were stalling too.'

That was why they never tried using their laws against him.

Just as he was stalling until Alexander opened the boundary stele, they were trying to get their power back before engaging in battle with an unidentified enemy.

They weren't idiots.

No matter how angry they were, they used their heads to keep themselves secure.

Damien may have appeared as a Demigod in their perception, but he was able to break through all of their protections to attack them while they were in the Heavenly God Plane.

He couldn't be as simple as he appeared.

So, instead of needlessly risking themselves, they chased him and probed him while recovering their strength.

But now they had reached that point. They no longer needed to play it safe, and they'd somewhat surmised what Damien was capable of.

Though, the timing really was perfect.

Because just as they lost the need to stall, Damien did as well.

The ground rumbled and dust rose into the skies.

"Something" was happening to the boundary steles.

Chapter 1383 Stele [2]

Everyone saw it. No matter where they were in the secret realm, they all saw the great boundary steles blocking off the remaining 4/5ths of it crumble.

It was a grand scene, as if countless feats of humanity were being both destroyed and revealed at the same time.

To the Veritas Clan, who was currently regrouping, it didn't mean much. They had other work that took priority over exploration, and even if they didn't, they weren't about to enter uncharted territory when their younger generation was present.

The Vega Clan had similar thoughts. They stayed back to see how the others would react. As for the Kyushu Federation, they immediately sent word to their superiors and established a force exclusively with their older experts while leaving their young geniuses behind.

They could smell the money on the other side of that stele, and they couldn't let someone else reach it first.

Unfortunately, they failed to see the "reason" why the stele broke in the first place.

The Straea Clan was already ousted from the secret realm. All of their geniuses, forces, and protectors had been killed except for two Gods.

And those two Gods were chasing the very man who opened new horizons for the entire Eastern Region.

"Brat, you're dead!"

The man, Gerald Straea, shouted as he gathered his laws and mana. The woman he was with, Pria Straea, was quieter, but her emotions were just the same.

They both gathered their power as Gods, ignoring the falling boundary stele, and attacked Damien.

VOOOOOOOOOOOM!

Two massive tsunamis of power were let loose into the world.

From the Heavens to the earth, the entire world changed color into a deep crimson red.

That oddly colored world devoured the true colorful world with every passing second as it approached Damien.

From his perspective, it was absolutely terrifying.

'That's all the power of Law.'

Their laws didn't just interfere with or affect the atmosphere, they completely swallowed it.

If Damien was struck by that, even he couldn't say he wouldn't be devoured.

'I have to run first. Now isn't the time to be arrogant.'

He knew it from the start, but seeing it directly made him feel it on a completely new level. Gods were called Gods for a reason.

He pushed his mana and teleported as fast as possible in the direction of the newly opened territory.

On the way, a red blur approached him and disappeared into his body.

Collecting Alexander was his only worry, and since it happened so quickly, he lost all need to slow his pace.

Flash!

His speed suddenly reached unprecedented levels. The stele that had once become a shadow in the distance was already directly in front of him, and he pushed towards it without any thoughts about the dangers that lay beyond.

But, Damien was a Demigod.

His teleportation had been restricted ever since he came to the Heavenly World.

And he was now seeing the true face of the Gods he challenged.

That crimson world followed him without any problems, keeping up with the speed of his teleportation.

As if to tell him it was useless to try running, Gerald and Pria put even more Divine Energy into their manifestation, increasing its speed beyond what Damien could outrun.

The crimson world swallowed him.

"KAHAK!"

Damien coughed up several mouthfuls of blood as his entire body was assaulted by their laws.

His own laws tried to fight back, but there was a huge difference between a general and a commander. No matter how close Damien was to his laws, he couldn't twist them with enough freedom to combat the opposition as fiercely as he needed to.

Still, he did his best to keep that energy out of his body, and, as he found through this attack, the Void Physique's integration had another useful effect.

Void Energy circulated through his body naturally. He no longer needed to wait for it to enter his body and suppress the invading forces.

From every direction, from every pore, vein, and nerve, Void Energy let loose its force and tamed the foreign energy.

It kept Damien from getting too injured, but the Authority of Immortality was having trouble keeping up, so he was still getting injured.

"FUCK!"

He roared, using his voice to project mana since his body was being inhibited.

His energy burst into the surroundings and repelled the incoming force.

With the single instant of freedom he bought, Damien mobilized all the force hidden within his body and pushed against the crimson world.

VOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

The colliding laws painted a beautiful picture, but Damien didn't have the mind to pay attention to it.



He was spit out of the crimson world by the repulsion caused by the collision, and finding himself with the freedom of movement again, he teleported once more.

He made it past the border.

And, of course, his enemies chased him there as well.

Would these Straea Clan Gods give up on him so easily?

Truthfully, their rational minds told them to. Damien's life wasn't a reward great enough to offset the risks of this endeavor.

However, they still did it.

Perhaps if their pursuit had just started, they would've been able to drop it.

But now, it wasn't just their personal grievances on the line. It was pride, and it was the reputation of their Straea Clan.

If they were outsmarted and outplayed by a mere mercenary from the Veritas Clan, what would people say about them?

While it seemed strange, the Straea Clan was a place that relied on its reputation more than others.

The Northern Region they ruled over had a special categorization among the other cardinal regions.

It was called the "Lawless Zone."

If the Straea Clan lost the ability to strike absolute fear into the hearts of those living there, if they lost their indomitable reputation because of a stain like this one, their authority would be challenged over and over again until they had to face great losses to protect themselves.

Those were the nuances of governing the Northern Region, something the Straea Clan had to deal with since they ruled by fear not trust.

So even while knowing the risks they were subjecting themselves to, Gerald and Pria followed Damien into the new territory and continued their attack.

Damien kept them in mind, but he was more focused on the environment around him.

'I have to find a route to escape. Battle isn't an option right now.'

He couldn't even guarantee that he could approach the two Straea Gods now that they were healed. He couldn't risk a battle.

If fleeing was the only option, he had to do so properly so he didn't encounter something worse than them in this forbidden area.

'For now, I just have to—'

BANG!

"ARGH!"

A fist slammed straight into his side, blasting a hole in his body and throwing him several hundred kilometers to the west.

His eyes went on alert.

'If I was even an instant slower, I would've been bisected.'

He didn't notice Gerald until the last moment.

That man's speed was far greater than what Damien thought possible for him.

He spread his awareness in a contained area around his body and heightened his senses as much as possible.

Gerald was already coming in for a second punch.

'To the head this time.'

Damien slightly tilted his head to dodge it, and instantly, a rush of wind pelted his face.

WHOOOOOOOOSH!

The fist was only a few centimeters from his cheek, but its force was enough to tear a chunk out of his shoulder despite the lack of connection.

There was already another fist flying.

Damien sensed it coming towards his stomach.

However...

"...!"

His eyes suddenly went wide.

Without a second thought or even a fraction of a spark of an instant's hesitation, he teleported six times in quick succession, allowing the force to rebound onto his body for the sake of escape.

It was an absolutely instinctive reaction that sacrificed his safety for survival.

It was an instinct that Gerald didn't have.

It was like time slowed down.

Damien reappeared in the real world after his consecutive teleportations.

His body was only half materialized when he saw it.

In the space where he and Gerald were, in the place where only Gerald stood now.

An open maw.

A mouth lined with hundreds of thousands of razor-sharp teeth.

The bottom jaw was out of sight, while the top of the jaw was standing tall like a million-kilometer skyscraper.

It was a maw that could devour worlds.

And in the same instant it appeared, it snapped shut.

Gerald's life aura disappeared instantly, as did "that thing."

Only Damien and Pria remained in the air.

And neither of them could move.

"That thing..."

They shared the same thought.

What the hell just happened?

Chapter 1384 Trace [1]

'I have to go.'

All other thoughts were gone from Damien's mind.

There was no place for them to exist.

He didn't even wait until he'd fully processed what just happened.

Without paying any mind to the remaining enemy God or anything else that could be lurking below his feet, he furiously teleported deeper into uncharted territory to get away from whatever "that thing" was.

'That boundary stele...there's no doubting it now. It was there for a reason.'

He expected it to get more dangerous. That was granted since he was opening an area that was forbidden until now.

But to see a True God, one of the strongest people present in the Forbidden Secret Realm, die in a single instant was a completely different matter.

It was terrifying.

Even with all the power Gerald had, despite being someone who could even kill Damien, he died in a single instant without a hint of a chance to fight back.

If even he suffered a fate like that, then nobody stood a chance.

But people were still going to come. The clans would still explore these uncharted lands, and they would eventually send people strong enough to stand against the ecosystem and explore.

However, that was a story for another time. As long as Damien would be involved with this realm, it would remain a cemetery for Gods.

Damien didn't let himself think too much. He single-mindedly followed the force that called him past the border in the first place.

He didn't look back, he didn't look down, he barely even looked ahead. He was entirely focused on that force, putting everything else he had into fleeing.

The destroyed boundary stele, Pria Straea, and everything else he brought with him through the barrier was left behind, and when the surrounding environment changed from a lush rainforest with verdant greenery in every direction to a more rocky and arid terrain, he finally slowed his pace.

"Huu..."

He took a deep breath and steadied himself.

'That was insane.'

It wasn't his first time experiencing an event like this. There had actually been several instances in the past where a strong character was caught by surprise and killed by something far stronger.

However, what separated this incident from the rest was power.

Godhood was the ceiling.

There was nothing higher than it, not that Damien knew of.

Yes, Gerald was hardly a God. He was at the lowest of what Gods could be, as were all the Gods that were sent to the secret realm.

But did that change anything?

Someone who crossed the threshold and created a Godhood was killed in a single instant. Someone who'd reached the ceiling was still so vulnerable in the face of true power.

Damien was not a coward, but he was not an arrogant brat either.

He had no plans to die because of a mistake like Gerard made, so he didn't think of anything but fleeing until he reached his current distance of at least several billion kilometers away from the location.

Here, as the ecosystem changed, the creatures living on the ground below became visible. The canopy hiding them disappeared, and the environment became discolored so it was difficult for the largest of them to camouflage.

This kind of landscape usually supported the growth of subterranean creatures, so Damien didn't let his guard down, but he was at least confident he could react before dying in a place like this.

After all, last time it was definitely luck.

'The thing that's calling for me is close. If I'm reading it right, it should be right over there...'

Around fifty million miles away, there was a mountain range. It extended past Damien's eye line, but he didn't actually have to go into the mountains.

Instead, his target was the massive ravine that formed at the base of the very first mountains, acting as a natural barrier between the separate terrains.

'I've scanned with my awareness too many times, but I haven't found anything of note. Rather than feeling safe, I feel even less secure.'

There were tons of beasts below but he couldn't sense any that would pose a real threat to him.

However, an attack like the one that killed Gerald couldn't be uncommon in this place. Perhaps the creature that ate him was the ruler of the rainforest area, but that also told of the existence of a ruler of this new area too.

Since Damien couldn't sense anything of the sort, it was either extremely powerful, extremely stealthy, or extremely smart, none of which were good for him.

'Awareness isn't enough.'

If he wanted to practice safety in a place like this, he had to do more.

Damien's mana flared out calmly, growing bigger and bigger before turning into a sea of clones.

These clones scoured the skies and the earth without much purpose at all, just wandering.

They were made to observe and be killed. They were Damien's eyes and ears, so he wouldn't encounter surprises as he made his way to the ravine.

The trek wasn't very exciting because of these precautions, but it was better that way.



He made it to the ravine quickly, and after sending a few clones in, he entered himself.

'It's dark.'

It was natural from a space like this, but Damien's eyes were taking longer to adapt than he expected.

'That can only mean it's being artificially enhanced by something.'

He focused on the connection with his clones.

'Nothing seems to be going on, but that could also be a facade. The force calling me is somewhere near the bottom of this ravine, so I have to keep traveling downward regardless.'

It was damp and musty, despite the space being open to the air outside, the further down he went, the less prominent its effects were.

The atmosphere was suffocating, as was the darkness itself. It gripped Damien's skin, crawling over him like a colony of ants.

It was quiet too. He knew there were beasts living here. He could hear them scampering across the rocks and leaving traces everywhere. He could hear them in the distance, growling and crooning for their individual purposes.

But nothing approached him.

Some came within a few feet, but any who did just stared at him with their big beady eyes as he continued his descent.

Honestly, it was scary. It was far creepier than it would've been if they just attacked them as they usually did, because something was making these beasts ignore their instincts and watch him.

'And the worst part...'

Spiders. Tons of them.

They were the main species inhabiting this ravine.

Damien was a grown adult now. To say he still irrationally feared spiders was...just a bit much.

However...

'For this to be one of the things that stayed with me through all that growth is a little crazy.'

His fists itched. Every time he saw a spider, he wanted to crush it into oblivion.

Spiders were surprisingly uncommon in his journey. He saw them in the Severed World, but back then, there was too much going on for his irrationality to play any role in his actions.

This situation was different.

It was a situation that pushed irrationality to the forefront and made one doubt everything. As the darkness became darker, the light that guided one's thoughts was dimmed, and those fears and negative emotions hidden in the shadows were given a chance to act.

For Damien, those emotions weren't as prominent as they were for most people, but there was still something there.

Something he had never been able to get rid of.

Indifference and destructive tendencies.

Those things he suppressed as much as possible, tied to physical motivators like spiders, made his thoughts go awry in the strangest ways.

Damien didn't know what was happening, but there was something wrong with this ravine.

Something twisted that he couldn't begin to explain.

Chapter 1385 Trace [2]

"Huu..."

"Huu..."

"Huu..."

"Huu..."

His breath was the only thing he could hear.

After passing a certain point, even the sounds of creatures crawling around him disappeared.

And the walls of the ravine kept closing in.

Damien barely had space to squeeze his body through them, and he didn't have the choice to break them either.

After all, behind those walls...

'...I don't even want to know what's behind those walls.'

The fluctuations alone were horrifying. Damien's body instinctually froze when he first sensed them, and his senses screamed, telling him that if he tried to scan with his awareness, he'd die.'

There was a beast here. A beast beyond even what Damien saw kill Gerald.

And the only thing separating him from that beast was the walls.

"Huu..."

"Huu..."

Did he mention the darkness earlier?

It was even worse now.

The environment couldn't get any darker. The suppression weighing down on Damien's shoulders from the ambient darkness was already sinking him deeper into the ravine, but his senses were now also being suppressed.

The All-Seeing Eyes were functioning properly. His soul sense and whatnot were all working as they should've, but his physical vision was darkening, his sense of smell was gone, his sense of hearing was dull, and how sense of touch was numb.

Damien looked up.

There was only the color black. He couldn't see the exit to the ravine anymore.

He looked around.

It was all black.

He could barely feel the walls anymore.

He just kept moving down, getting closer to the thing that called him here.

"Huu..."

"Huu..."

Damien stayed as quiet as possible. He reined in his mana and hid his presence as he descended.

He kept his hands on the walls to keep his sense of the surroundings intact, but as he did so, he felt the walls getting further and further until they were too far to reach unless he moved his entire body.

Evidently, the area had widened into a cavern.

Damien used just a small trace of mana to levitate, turning to look around himself.

"Huu..."

"Huu..."

"Huu—"

Damien's eyes widened.

He held his breath.

'That...'

He almost couldn't believe his eyes.

'What is...that?'

It was just a shadow.

Could it even be called a shadow?

The only reason he could see it was because of the bioluminescent lifeforms living on its scales.

It was also because of them that he could see the true extent of this cavern.

It was at least several billion miles long, spanning deep into the mountain range above. It was so large that the ground above logically shouldn't have been able to remain stable, but because of the densely packed rock that made up the soil in this area, similar to that of the Ancient Battlefield, such problems were absent.

There was definitely something below this place. The signal Damien was following was bouncing around, making it seem like it was either here or down further, however, Damien had no way to reach a place below here.

He couldn't even see the ground.

Because that creature was here.

That beast's body covered the entire ground of the billion-kilometer-long cavern. It was proportionally wide for its length, and no matter how Damien looked at it, he knew exactly what this creature was.

'A dragon.'

It was a dragon beyond dragons, a dragon that even the Azure Dragon couldn't compare to.

It was currently slumbering, and judging from the way the flora was growing over its body, it had been in this position, undisturbed, for eons.

'Do I keep going?'

Logically speaking, a being of this size couldn't be weak. If it woke up, Damien would probably die.

But also logically speaking, it was so large it took up the entire cavern. Its mobility was probably the worst, so it was a question of whether or not it could actually exert its power.

And even if it couldn't...

'...will it let me pass so easily?'

'But if I want that thing I have to go.'

He had been forced to do risk assessment several times throughout this journey. He made it relatively without issues, but the death lurking around him made him wary.

Was this trek worth it?

What if he appeared at that place and found something that wouldn't really benefit him much at all?

That was the worst-case scenario, but he had to consider it at least once.

However, the more he thought about it, the more dissuaded he was from retreating.

The biggest reason was the boundary stele.

'This place was locked away by a trace of existence. That's rarer than rare to find in nature, and in the first place, the boundary steles aren't naturally made structures. The presence of that trace makes one thing clear.'

Somebody who'd comprehended Existence came here at some point and established the boundary stele.

And something beyond that boundary stele was calling to Damien, another person who comprehended Existence.

It wasn't a matter of "what if" anymore. Damien knew exactly what was waiting for him, and he couldn't give it up.

'I have to try.'

He descended slowly.

Atop being a billion kilometer long, the dragon was several hundred million kilometers wide and tall.

Damien didn't have more than ten million kilometers to descend before he was already on the dragon's body.

He landed with light steps on the beast's back and continued moving as covertly as possible.

'I should change my footwork.'

He stepped on a strange path, almost making his movements appear like those of a beast.

It wouldn't be strange for some smaller creatures to create habitats on the dragon's body or move along it, so as long as Damien pretended to be one of them, the dragon wouldn't react.



That was his thought process as he tried to find a way around the beast, but it didn't last for long.

Because the ground rumbled.

Nothing really changed around him, but far, far away, an orb of light appeared at the end of the cavern.

No, it wasn't an orb of light at all.

Damien froze once more.

'Fuck...'

There was no turning back anymore.

That was no glowing light orb. That was no moon.

That was the eye of a dragon, and it was staring right into his soul.

'Run? Run.'

Damien turned around and instantly teleported away.

Or at least, he tried to.

But the space around him was already locked.

The spatial layers refused his presence, and as he realized it, he pushed his feet to the ground and started running.

But what did logic matter to a being of this capacity?

Damien had no way of knowing how it did it, but the dragon moved its head all the way around until it was looming over his body.

And within the same second, it opened its mouth and roared.

The sound waves popped Damien's eardrums and made him dizzy.

The Authority of Immortality immediately healed him back to normal, but "immediately" simply wasn't fast enough.

The dragon's jaw snapped shut around him,

And with a strong suction force like something out of a nightmare, it swallowed him into its stomach.

It all happened in but an instant.

In the next, the dragon had already returned to its slumber.

The cavern went silent.

Leaving Damien's fate completely unknown to anyone but himself.

Chapter 1386 First Piece [1]

The inside of a dragon; what was it supposed to look like?

If one took a reasonable approach to this question, it would probably be dark, sticky, and filled with strange liquids that nobody would want to be slathered in.

It wasn't like it mattered in the first place. Before one was even given the chance to experience it, one would either have been killed by the dragon's jaws or melted down by its bodily fluids.

However, Damien didn't experience any of that.

Nor did he experience what it felt like to be inside a dragon.

The second he was swallowed, he found himself in a different space.

He fell through a winding tunnel of multicolored visions. It was a hallucinogenic experience, with countless memories from Damien's memories and the world's history floating around him and melding together with no sense of continuity whatsoever.

It was like a rabbit hole to another world. He looked all around himself and tried to make sense of the things in the passage, but there was nothing coherent enough to understand.

These scenes were too broken. They were too strangely intertwined and none of them remained what they used to be.

Damien fell without being able to do anything. Like he was on a slide to oblivion, he simply sat there and took in the experience without access to any sort of mana or energy.

Minutes passed, hours passed, and at some point, once Damien started to get bored of the confusion, he was spat out of the other side of the tunnel in a completely new area.

'It's here.'

He noticed immediately. The force he'd been searching for was somewhere in his vicinity.

'Of all things, I didn't expect it to happen like this.'

If he knew he could've just run into the dragon's mouth and found this place so easily, he wouldn't have gone through all the trouble of being covert.

Wasn't this so much easier?

Obviously, his mindset wasn't a normal one. No sane person would just jump into a dragon's mouth because they knew there was something mysterious waiting for them.

But since when was normal?

The experience was definitely odd. Several hundred more words could be used to describe it, but they were unnecessary, because Damien himself didn't place any relevance on it.

Therefore, when he arrived in the new space, he completely forgot about all things related to the dragon and focused back on his original goal.

The area was filled with it.

This place had no real form. It was a cave when Damien thought it was a cave, and it would turn into a great expanse the second he had that thought.

It wasn't an illusion, nor was it reality. It could be either depending on how it was viewed.

Because this place was filled with it.

The aura of Existence.

It was a mini world that acted as a manifestation of existence. As long as it was a concept under existence, this world could become a representation of it.

Damien walked through the plains as they narrowed into a valley and rose into mountains. He followed as the mountains crumbled into rivers and flowed into the sea before freezing over and becoming a snowy tundra.

He walked through all sorts of environments that turned into people, people who turned into energy, and energy that turned into the genesis of all things.

He didn't know where he was going, nor did he know what his purpose was.

He'd already reached this place. He already found what he was looking for. But what was he supposed to do with it?

There was no way for him to understand easily, so he continued to walk.

From the vastness of space to the tiniest quantum particle, from the tangibility of the human body to the esoteric workings of the consciousness, he ambled and strolled.

He sauntered and trudged. He plodded and hiked. He trekked and marched. He wandered and tread.

Until he eventually reached a place that seemed like the end of the path.

It was a skeleton sitting against the wall. The wall wasn't attached to anything, as if this place was isolated from the existence manifestation that was the space around it.

An oasis, or rather, an imperfection, within the perfect painting of reality.

Damien looked at the skeleton curiously.

There wasn't anything wrong with it even when he scanned it with his awareness. At least in the physical plane, this skeleton was truly nothing more than someone's decaying bones.

However, Existence had two sides.

When one thought of ethereal existence, the first thing that came to mind was energy.

Ethereal existence accounted for mana and all other possible energies that existed in the grand cosmos.

However, energy was only a single facet. Ethereal existence dug deeper than that.

The human mind. Consciousness, emotions, and complex thought.

These things that could be half explained through brain chemistry but otherwise remained mysterious due to their complexity were also included in the ethereal side of existence.

So Damien didn't sideline the skeleton just because he couldn't immediately see anything from it.

He put his hand out.

His hand turned ethereal and passed through the skeleton's skull.

He gathered mana, creating a small ball of light within the bone.

And using that energy as a medium, he accessed the vestiges left behind by the owner of the skeleton.

The world around him changed again.

Damien pulled his hand out of the skeleton's skull as it and the wall it rested against vanished.

In its place, no, roughly twenty feet in front of Damien, there now stood a man.

"So, eventually, there was someone."

The man spoke, both addressing Damien and speaking as if he wasn't present.

"Child, I cannot see you," he continued.

"However, I am aware of your existence."

It meant this wasn't a meeting with that man, but a recording Damien was watching.

"I do not know when you will come, for the future becomes blurry after eons of waiting. When you arrive, perhaps this world will not be the same one I left for you."

The words contained plenty of hidden meanings that Damien couldn't quite understand.

The man's eyes were open, but there was nothing there. Within his eye sockets were sclera made of white light with no sense of self behind them.

Damien couldn't tell if the man really existed.

'No, that's the whole point.'

At some point, the man was real. He was present within existence.

However, at some point, the line between existence and nonexistence blurred for him.

His fate was unknown, but he knew there was someone else who would appear, another person who understood Existence.

So he left his will here for that person who would eventually come.

"It is confusing, but even confusion is a matter of Existence. Rise above it, understand it, and learn to control it."

Damien listened as the man kept talking. Most of it was rambling, but within that nonsense, there was enough truth for Damien to grasp.

This was a lesson for him.

The man was telling him to truly see through reality and truly take hold of Existence.

Not just that, he was telling Damien how to do it.

This was the key he'd been looking for, the truth that would let him reach new heights in his stalling growth.

And Damien did not plan to waste this opportunity at all.

Chapter 1387 First Piece [2]

It was useless to repeat the man's words. In the first place, there wasn't much rhyme or reason to what he was saying.

Damien could understand it because he was also comprehending Existence. The words themselves meant nothing, it was the essence behind them, the movement of energy and worlds they caused, that really mattered.

So as Damien listened to the man speak, he learned.

Existence was that type of concept.



It didn't have an end, but it had a clear beginning. It was a line that expanded infinitely in a single direction, and as a byproduct, other things were established around it.

There was no real method to control Existence. Everyone who had the ability to rule it would do so in their own unique way.

For this man, it was through words. Every word he spoke had divine effects, changing reality to fit his image.

But he also knew this method only worked for him.

To even find the method, one needed to first learn how to consciously manipulate Existence rather than just tapping into its power as Damien had been doing.

And after listening to the man speak for what felt like ages, Damien understood the crux of what he was saying.

That man was nameless. He didn't have any sort of record or Legend denoting his existence, and he went completely unknown in the cosmos.

However, he was also someone who managed to control the esoteric force of existence.

How he remained unknown was even more unknown than he was. It was impossible for a grand character with this kind of talent to be swept under the rug.

But other than the shame of not being able to bring respect to his predecessor's name, Damien didn't care much about his story.

That man was unrecorded because that was the path he chose. Since it was so, Damien focused on absorbing his teachings and finding a path for himself.

To control Existence.

The key was "understanding."

Damien had an understanding of the nature of existence, but that wasn't what he needed here. That was only the first step he took to gain acknowledgment from the concept.

If he truly wanted to control it as his own, he needed to understand the "will" of Existence.

It was such a vague task that Damien almost raged right then and there, but naturally, the man was providing him a method to understand, not just telling him to do so.

'No, it's not a complete method. It's just a portion of it.'

It couldn't be helped. Old monsters never made it easy for their descendants to gain their legacies. It was always a journey of self-discovery and intrigue that finally led to a conclusion not just in terms of power, but also in identity.

The growth of the mind, soul, and body was half of the reward. It was the reward the descendants would gain through their hard work as they tried to take the easy way out, which would eventually lead to life-altering events that shaped them into good men and women.

Damien understood why experts usually separated their legacies into multiple parts, but as someone who didn't think he had much growing left to do in his mentality and whatnot, he was definitely a little annoyed.

Regardless, he would still follow the man's legacy and search for the other hidden locations.

Because what he learned from this one was great.

There were a total of six steps from what he could gather. Three were related to material existence while the other three it's ethereal counterpart.

It wasn't like comprehending laws where one needed to understand concepts within the law to use it, it was more like one needed to understand the workings of reality.

The first step that Damien learned here was "harmony."

To harmonize with the world and become a part of its body, then to make the world a part of one's body and stand above the heavens.

It was impossible to rule something while being disconnected from it. An Emperor lived for his people and his empire. If he tried to act on personal feelings without considering his people, it would only lead to tragedy.

So Damien needed to understand his people.

He needed to understand the earth.

He needed to understand life.

And he needed to understand the mind.

He already had partial understanding of the concept. Through Absolute Perception, he was able to access the world's eye.

It was only at a base level that let him see for longer distances, but the world's eye was exactly as it was termed. If Damien could master that ability, he'd truly be able to see all things from the perspective of the world itself.

Once he'd achieved that step, he'd gain a level of control he couldn't imagine yet.

'There are six levels, but according to what the man said, this world was created with only the concept of harmony.'

But it wasn't a concept that could actively be mobilized.

Essentially, the man used "harmony" to form a vessel, and the world itself did the rest.

The so-called "manifestation of Existence" that peered into the very core of reality, the illusory reality Damien had been walking through until now, was entirely natural, not the product of outside interference.

'How is that even possible?'

He couldn't imagine it. This place could read into his soul and read into the cosmos itself like nothing, yet it was a simple creation using only the concept of harmony?

It was a massive moment of realization for him, almost like enlightenment.

He suddenly realized that the "Existence" he'd been taking so lightly was not light at all.

Just like the old Universal Core of Grand Heavens Boundary said, his steps were far lighter than they were meant to be.

Existence was "everything."

Because Nonexistence was also a concept, because of the ladder he climbed to reach Existence, Damien never really considered it properly, but that was the truth.

There was nothing he could think of that wouldn't fall under the umbrella of Existence.

The human brain had no way to fathom the truth of Nonexistence. Even the things considered "nothingness" by humanity were just representing the "absence" of other things.

Yet, even those concepts that filled the "absence" existed. Even they were part of Existence.

The Authority Damien currently had so much progress in was meant to control all of that.

All of Existence.

Anything and everything.

How did he never realize how grand the path he was walking was?

How did he never see how beautiful it was?

The mysterious man was still talking, but Damien could no longer hear him.

He no longer had an interest in his predecessors or successors.

He was living in this moment, no other thoughts in his mind.

He was feeling the weight of existence, and through that feeling, he suddenly felt in tune with the world.

His body became hazy.

His mind left the vessel it called home and drifted into the sea of wonder that was the fabric of reality.

There was so much to explore, and he had only stepped a single foot into the water.

No more.

No more would he remain naive.

No more would he underestimate this amazing power.

He dove in head-first and enjoyed the coldness of the depths against his skin.

The concept of harmony was his starting point.

The real starting point that would allow him to reach the end of this path

Chapter 1388 Grudge [1]

It was a genuinely surreal experience.

Damien wasn't a person with doubts.

He was assured in himself and he was assured in his power, so something like enlightenment wasn't an experience he had often, if at all.

Every time he'd been "enlightened," it came as a result of his consistent effort, or as a result of a clue given by someone else.

Then what about this time?

While the unrecorded man's words that gave Damien knowledge of the six pieces he needed and the concept of harmony could be considered a clue, it wasn't much at all.

It gave Damien a path forward, but it didn't tell him how to walk it. It told him what could be done, but it didn't tell him how to do it.

And more importantly, it didn't really touch upon the grandiosity of Existence.

It actually did the opposite. By separating the concept of Existence into six pieces that, when put together, would absolutely reign over it, the man's explanation grounded Existence and made it something tangible.

So for Damien to realize the greatness of his Authority and gain enlightenment was an unexpected occurrence, almost as if it was willed by the Heavens.

He sat down right then and there. He didn't have time to waste on meaningless thoughts.

He delved into the deepest recesses of his mind and sank into a state of realization, capitalizing on the sudden enlightenment and expanding on what he learned from it to gain even more.

This process was extremely vague. He was merely thinking, if one wanted to look at it objectively, but the results weren't things that could come out of mere thoughts.

Damien was exploring the concept of harmony. He was in a state similar to Absolute Perception that only spanned a few tens of meters, a state where he was completely in tune with the world.

Within this state, he was able to "see" everything. This sight wasn't just physical like it was when he used his ability normally. He could literally see what the world saw.

Whether it be the energies harmonizing in every particle of existence to create that very existence, the existences that were created through these particles and roaming the various areas of the manifestation of existence under his guidance, or anything else within his domain of sight, he peered deep into them and aimed not to control them, but to understand them.

The concept of harmony didn't have much use, but it was important in understanding the true meaning of existence. How could one aim to control a concept they couldn't even begin to perceive?

Damien fell deep into his trance and lost his sense of self within it. He pondered and wondered, ambled through the fabric of reality, and completely became one with the world for a brief period of time.

Well, it was only brief in his mind.

As he asked and answered countless questions that led to countless more that he simply couldn't answer with his current knowledge, as he speculated on what the other pieces of existence were and how to find them, as he planned for several hundreds of potential futures that could occur once he left this special space, time passed like a flowing creek.

It was quiet and calm, more peaceful than anything else, but underneath were currents that the beings living within it could hardly fathom.

Days turned into weeks, and weeks into months.

Damien remained completely still, surrounded by an ever-changing canvas that molded to his thoughts.

Until eventually, his eyes fluttered open.

'I've grasped it.'

He looked down at his hand, clenching and unclenching his fist.

His body almost didn't feel like his own anymore, but the comfort of returning to it begged to differ.

'What an experience.'

It was only in this tiny portion of the world that was disconnected from the real world, but he felt it.

He harmonized with Existence. He became part of the fabric of reality.

And in that state, he experienced "vision" like he'd never felt before.

'I guess it's gone...'



He looked around, his eyes readjusting to their physical limits. The manifestation of reality and the Unrecorded who created it were gone. Only he remained in the darkness, floating in a void of emptiness.

'I must depart.'

He couldn't describe the experience he'd just had. He couldn't put into words what it felt like to become a part of Existence itself rather than one of the countless existences within it.

But it was so jarring and fantastical that he felt a burning desire to exit this blackness that seemed to lack all of its wonders.

As he observed his body, he learned that a much larger amount of time than he'd expected had passed since he arrived in this place, and when considering the timeline of events outside, he didn't know what could have happened.

'First things first, I should regroup with the Veritas Clan.'

The 5 years period he agreed to serve them for ended while he was in seclusion, but he still needed to meet them again.

Plus, he had to make sure the ones he left were still safe. If anything happened to them, he could bid his freedom goodbye.

'Logically speaking, there shouldn't be anything else that can harm them.'

The Straea God Gerald was already dead, and the one named Pria was stranded in the uncharted territory. Whether she survived or not, she surely didn't have the energy to return past the boundary stele and threaten the Veritas group.

'Still, I should check before I leave.'

It was better to be cautious than unaware.

Damien glanced around once more in search of a way out of this place, but there wasn't one.

Instead, once thoughts of departing became concrete in his mind, he was directly teleported away.

He found himself outside the ravine, as if nothing he'd just experienced was real.

However, he knew very well the veracity of those events.

He didn't need to question himself. No, thoughts like those had no place in his heart.

How could he be doubtful when he was so excited?

The problem he'd been dealing with for the past four years was solved, albeit partially. He was ready to set foot on a new path, one that truly ingrained him in the Heavenly World's makeup.

'Absolute Perception.'

He made use of the ability. With his newfound knowledge and mental strength, covering tens of billions of kilometers wasn't a problem.

He could see all the way back to the boundary stele and even a bit beyond it from where he stood, and more importantly, he could see a large portion of the uncharted territory.

'It looks like the Veritas Clan stayed put like I told them to. As for the rest...'

He didn't see anyone he recognized from the Vega Clan group, but he spotted an expedition party from the Kyushu Federation slowly making their way across the ground.

And...

'...the remnants.'

Led by a familiar face were roughly six people from the Straea Clan, the last remaining members of the large group they used to attack the Veritas party.

'Since I'm already here...'

Damien's eyes sparkled with killing intent.

'...then I should finish the job I started.'

#### Chapter 1389 Grudge [2]

He didn't particularly hold a grudge against Pria, and the Veritas Clan's hostility had nothing to do with his own, but Damien had learned a great deal in the four years of mercenary work he did before coming here.

He never forgot about Void Palace, after all. Once he learned the severity of their situation from Yulia, he was constantly searching for deeper knowledge on the hidden undercurrents breaking down their influence.

And among them, two influences came up more than any others.

The Straea Clan and the Divine Order.

These two forces were the ones truly targeting Void Palace. The Kyushu Federation was involved at a surface level, but they never truly tried to destroy Void Palace.

They only acted to take territory that would be beneficial to them.

However, the two aforementioned clans weren't just targeting Void Palace's territory, but the great clan itself.

They wanted its total destruction, and since that was the case, Damien wanted their total destruction in return.

It was a little funny for him to be thinking of challenging a God when he'd just been forced to flee so miserably from them, but he wasn't acting arrogantly.

He didn't have the power to fight them head-on. This much was still true.

However, he was different now. It wasn't noticeable, but he had changed greatly in the last few months.

If one looked at the current Damien, they'd find that he currently looked extremely similar to an average mortal. His aura was completely reined in, and as if he didn't exist at all, he completely blended in with the environment.

It was unknown whether even a low-class God could realize his presence if he didn't actively reveal it.

He had reached a level of harmony. It wasn't complete, but it was definitely more than just a preliminary state.

Because of that, and because of the Absolute Perception he used moments ago, he had gained far more knowledge on the uncharted area than anyone else.

'Which means I can kill them without actually facing them.'

He smiled. Using someone else's knife to kill wasn't usually his style, but he had no qualms about doing it when he needed to.

His body disappeared, flashing away into the surrounding greenery.

A great scene was going to unfold in the uncharted territory soon.

And it would become the main reason this place remained unexplored for many, many years to come.

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Deep underground, in a familiar ravine that only two men had ever set foot in, an eye pried open.

Whooooooooosh!

A light wind breezed through the space, shaking the rock and causing a minor earthquake that didn't spread to the surface.

"Is it over?"

A voice resounded afterward, making the earth shake even harder. It was too filled with power without being infused with power at all, simply causing natural disasters with its presence,

A dim light encompassed a massive being slumbering in the depths, and soon after, that massive being was no longer.

In its place was a woman roughly 40 years in age whose beauty rivaled those half her age. She had pure white hair and crystal clear blue eyes, completely contrasting the terrifying appearance of her true form.

"In the end, he truly came."

Her voice was filled with melancholy, as if she was speaking to someone who could no longer hear her.

"For fifty million years, I have waited. For fifty million years, I dutifully fulfilled the task you gave me..."

Her forlorn expression could dig up the ounce of pity hidden in the hearts of even the coldest men, however, her eyes had a trace of relief that was hard to notice.

"...will it truly go the way you deemed it would?"

It was a question nobody could answer.

"Despite all of us believing you would be the one to overcome all things, even you met your end to 'that being.'"

The Unrecorded. He wasn't unrecorded by choice, but that was the result of his existence.

He lived a life that should've been remembered for generations to come, but in the end, he made a bet he couldn't win.

He bet his "existence."

And when he lost, his everything was erased from history.

Only a few beings, enough to be counted on one hand, remembered his true name and remembered his Legend. Only they remembered the timeline that was erased from history.

However, even they could not speak his name or publicize his Legend, because if they did so, even they would be erased from this world.

They could not die.

Because the Unrecorded left a prophecy in his wake.

He saw the future where his path would be continued by someone else, someone better. He said that the heights he could never see would finally be breached by that man.

Yet, she couldn't see it.

"He is certainly talented, but can he truly go as far as you said?"

She knew exactly what stood at the end of that path. It was a guardian that nobody could beat, a being that toyed with others like puppets no matter whether they were mortals or Gods.

Could a mere young man, not even a hundred years old, surpass that wall?

"No matter his talent or potential, I cannot see it, but perhaps that is why you were the one to go higher than the rest of us. There was never a time when I could truly read what was on your mind."

She spoke to nobody but herself. The hope that he reincarnated and heard her words somehow couldn't exist in her heart. She was well aware of what his end meant.

But she spoke anyway, because she had to get these thoughts off her chest.

"Haa..."

She sighed to herself.

"I can do nothing but watch."

She didn't like it, but that was the role bestowed upon her.

She was a loyal person. Despite the grievances in her heart, she wouldn't shulk on the duty left to her by the only person in this world she'd never considered family.

She looked into the ceiling above, her gaze piercing it to view the outside world.

"I will judge for myself whether he is worthy of your post. And if he isn't..."

Her eyes turned cold. A horrible aura filled the entire ravine, directly slaughtering the weaker creatures while forcing the stronger ones to prostrate themselves in submission.

"...then I will end him with my own hands before he can become someone truly unstoppable."

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The happenings in the ravine were known only to one dragon and would never be known to the outside world.

As for the person that dragon was now observing carefully...

Well, he had just finished setting up a trap for enemies he had no business trying to kill.

"Phew...it was rough doing all that without dying, but I managed somehow."

He didn't know much about the environment, so it took time, but after a few weeks of careful experimentation, he finally completed it.

His work of art.

He grinned to himself, wiping the sweat off his brow.

"If I'm not mistaken, they should arrive here in a few more days."



When that time came...

He truly couldn't wait to see what would happen.

Because this was truly a work of art beyond anything he'd accomplished with his brain before.

And if it worked as he intended it to, the consequences would be treacherous.

As the creator of such a thing, how could he not be excited?

"I think I finally understand the whole mad scientist thing."

Damien camouflaged himself and hid within the terrain itself.

Just a few more days until he could see it.

A few more days that passed in an instant.

Chapter 1390 Grudge [3]

Damien was a man of great destiny. Upon almost dying in the uncharted territory, he found his way to a treasure and made great gains.

However, this experience was only limited to those who had great fortune. For those who weren't so lucky, it was completely different.

Gerald died immediately. Pria was luckier because she was further away, but her fate wasn't much better than his in the coming days.

She had to endure and endure in an environment where she was no longer an illustrious God.

Where Gods were the norm and all those who were weak would be killed.

She had to struggle to survive. She barely even made it back to the area past the boundary stele where she could find some safety, and when she did, she learned that most of those who entered the realm with her were dead.

There were a few Demigods left, those who stayed back in case of an emergency situation, but that was it. Their numbers weren't great nor was their strength.

It was impossible to strike Veritas again no matter how much she wanted revenge.

She didn't know where Damien was, and without Gerald, she couldn't stand against the Veritas Grand Elders.

It was unfortunate, but it was reality. She had to grit her teeth and push down her personal feelings.

There was still time left before the secret realm closed. Was she supposed to just sit around and wait until she could go back to the Heavenly World and report the situation to her superiors?

No.

If she did that, not only would she die, her reputation would be sullied and she wouldn't gain peace even in death.

If she wanted to survive, she had to show results that offset their failure against Veritas.

Thus, with the few that were left from her clan, she went into the uncharted territory to explore.

Pria spent several days there before she managed to escape. She was hiding for most of it, terrified of creatures like the one that killed Gerald, but she at least knew more about the ecosystem than the Kyushu Federation's team.

With that knowledge, she led her expedition team deeper into the realm with incredible speed. As the months passed, they gained knowledge of the habitats and habits of several creatures that didn't exist in the Heavenly World, gathered resources that would benefit the Straea Clan, and overall made good progress.

Today was no different than any other day.

Or at least, it wasn't supposed to be.

They'd been trekking in the same direction for a while now, and it was almost time to switch paths so they didn't run into the Kyushu Federation group.

"Everyone, be careful."

Pria gave the same warning she'd given many times thus far. She couldn't stress it enough how wary they needed to be.

And despite the repetition of the warning, nobody in her group complained. After staying in the uncharted territory for some time, they'd seen enough to traumatize a grown man.

It was a truly horrid environment.

There wasn't a place in the Heavenly World where Gods could die so easily.

Even when they died, it was usually either a big event of some sort or a duel that deserved to be their end.

Regardless, they'd die after a hard-fought battle.

Here?

Here, there was no such thing as battle.

At their level, if they got too close to the wrong creature or organism, their deaths would be instant. They probably wouldn't even realize they'd died until they found themselves in the afterlife!

Nevertheless, with the caution they'd exercised until now, they'd managed to survive. It wasn't a caution they were willing to let go of.

They quietly made their way through the tall and thick leaves that densely packed the rainforest.

Completely unaware of the predator stalking them from the dark.

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"It's time."

Damien grinned.

Truthfully speaking, he didn't do much.

His job was just to bring together certain elements to make natural processes take place far faster, but in reality, the "trap" he prepared was just taking full advantage of the ecosystem to kill outsiders who knew nothing of its function.

The start of this process was simple.

What was a rainforest without rain?

It had been over a year since Damien entered the Forbidden Secret Realm, and though he'd spent several months in the ravine, unaware of the outside world, he hadn't seen rain at all in the time he spent on the surface.

It was strange, wasn't it?

When he dug into the truth of this matter, he found that this realm didn't actually have weather. It was created with a day and night cycle, but its weather would remain consistent regardless of condition or season.

So, then, why was the ecosystem able to breed into a rainforest? It was quite literally impossible without any sort of weather conditions.

The answer to that was simple.

'It should be arriving by now.'

Damien put the bait down a few days ago. Accounting for the time it would take for it to arrive here from its perch, its arrival was imminent.

He glanced over at Pria's party.

They were roughly one million kilometers away, extremely close to said bait.

'I want to watch from closer, but it's a shame that I'd die if I tried.'

He shrugged and watched as it happened.

A shadow appeared over the land, blotting out dozens of millions of kilometers of rainforest with its size.

The clouds in the sky parted under its weight, and the textured outline of a creature appeared in the eyes of those below.

'Godbeast: Thunderbird.'

An existence beyond Divine Beasts. An existence that established its place in the heavens and became one of the countless bloodlines that created the basis of all beasts.

It was a true Godbeast, perhaps the first of its kind.

When Damien discovered it, he almost couldn't hold his excitement and curiosity, but he was forced to because of its strength.

Instead, he spent great heaps of time watching it carefully from a distance as it went about its duties.

It mainly preyed on larger carnivorous species, but it had a soft spot for a certain type of herb called the Silver Moon Leaf. These were like a delicacy to the Thunderbird, and when Damien found out that fact, he immediately established the entire plan he was currently putting into action.

In fact, while Pria and the rest didn't know, they were surrounded by Silver Moon Leaves right now.

And as the Thunderbird came to collect them, its natural abilities were activated.

The Thunderbird had a role in this realm that couldn't be replaced.

It was the reason for the flourishing ecosystem that existed here.

It was the rain.

Drops of water fell from the air, guided by the Thunderbird's presence.

Everything under its body was enveloped in heavy rainfall, and as the mist rose over the rainforest, countless creatures came out of their hiding places.

This was step one of the plan.

The Thunderbird didn't care about humans. It would leave after it took the prize it came for.

But what about the rest?

Damien made sure they wouldn't let go of the appetizing prey he prepared for them.