

Void 141

Chapter 141 - First Lesson [3]

Xue Ruyue.

It was truly a name that matched her beauty. Her presence was like the moon, and even her name reflected this fact. Actually, Damien had been so focused on her mana and personality that he hadn't taken the time to admire her beauty.

Still, beauty wasn't enough to make him change his impression of her. Even if she had looks that even surpassed Rose, her personality didn't hold a candle.

Taking his eyes off of his new senior sister, Damien turned back to Tian Yang. "Master, now that the introductions are over, what are you going to teach me today?"

Tian Yang smiled at Damien's impatience. "Calm down. While I am prepared to teach you many things, some clarifications need to be made first."

Beckoning Damien to come towards him, Tian Yang continued. "For different types of meridians, there are different methods that need to be used during training. Some meridians don't hold the flexibility to cater some methods, while others are too flexible to treat roughly."

"Now come hold your arm out to me so I can check the structure of your meridians."

Damien walked in front of Tian Yang and held out his arm as he was asked. He was well aware of the fact that he didn't possess meridians, but he wanted to see what would happen.

His Ananta system was built to evolve with him, so he was sure he could tweak it if he ever found a more practical method. He was also curious what the denizens of this world would think of his system.

When Tian Yang grabbed Damien's hand, he let a gentle stream of mana enter his body. This mana didn't contain any malicious intent, instead, tracing along Damien's mana circuits and seeing their design.

Oddly enough, Damien's Void Physique had no reaction to this new foreign mana.

Tian Yang was almost forced to do a double-take when he saw the system running through Damien's body. Countless intricate amethyst veins lined his internal body, creating a second nervous system.

Not only did they reach his extremities and all his organs, they even connected to his brain. When Tian Yang reached the center of this system, he saw a large pulsing crystal that looked like a second heart.

This crystal continuously refined mana and sent it back through those veins connected to it, creating a feedback loop of refinement. Like this, as long as Damien continued improving, his mana would refine itself to a higher level.

‘What is this?’

Tian Yang had never seen anything like it before. One thing he was sure of, however, was that they weren't meridians in the slightest.

The smile on Tian Yang's face widened. 'I see. So that's how it is.'

By this point, Tian Yang had already lived for many centuries. It'd be odd for him to not understand what was going on.

'This kid is more daring than I originally thought.'

Someone who could inherit the Void Heart Sword Law would never be a normal person, but this was a different degree of abnormal.

Tian Yang was an adventurous spirit back in his prime before he realized his limits and settled down. He wasn't someone who would be content with sitting idly by while time passed around him.

Not only that, but he was also someone with a spatial affinity. It would've been impossible for him to reach his current level of attainment if he didn't explore the cosmos himself.

He had left the Celestial Star Palace that he grew up in to explore other worlds. He adventured, he fought, and he grew in power to reach his current strength.

By the time he returned to the Cloud Plane, he was an entirely different person with a wealth of experience under his belt.

At that time, he had already entered the Law Sea realm. Being at the peak of the world, he once again settled in at the sect he grew up in, supporting it and protecting it from his post as the Grand Elder.

Now, in front of him, there was another boy similar to him. A boy whose adventurous spirit could be clearly felt in his aura who also had the same spatial affinity as him. And this boy was visiting the Cloud Plane from some other star in the vast cosmos

The difference was that this boy's potential was much higher than his. 'Even after being a part of this sect that excels at divination for so long, I've always doubted fate. Yet, can this be considered anything else?'

Tian Yang removed his hand from Damien's wrist as his smile deepened. "You're quite a bold child, aren't you?" He said teasingly.

Damien knew exactly what he was talking about. From the start, he was aware he wouldn't be able to hide his origins from someone so much more powerful than him, so he decided it'd be best to be upfront with it.

With a large grin on his face, Damien decided to quip back. "Hm? What could you possibly be talking about?"

'He has the spirit of a cultivator too. Daring to act smart even in the face of power he can't comprehend.' Tian Yang thought.

It was their first true interaction, not counting when Damien first woke up after the disciple examination, and it had a great start. The two of them took an immediate liking to each other.

Xue Ruyue was watching the whole ordeal occur from across the room, and her eyes became complicated seeing the smile on her master's face. Still, her thoughts were known only to her.

There was an odd thing that could occur when two people with the same affinity met. There was a small chance that they would gravitate towards each other and develop a stronger bond than most.

When the affinity was as elusive and esoteric as the space element, this kind of connection could become even stronger. These people could bounce ideas off of each other and progress much faster through gaining enlightenment.

Even if Damien's strength didn't match up to Tian Yang's, his views and ideologies would be different. Through the intermingling of two perspectives and the exchange of their values, many newer and stronger ideas could be born.

Tian Yang naturally was aware of this, and he couldn't help but become somewhat excited over the prospect. How many years had it been since he'd made progress?

"Alright then. With this kind of meridians, you shouldn't have any problems with the training I will be putting you through. So, let's get started right away."

Slight undulations leaked from Tian Yang's body as he revolved his mana. Sensing this, even Xue Ruyue made distance.

Without warning, a suffocating pressure burst out of the old man's body. The pressure alone caused space to ripple, forming slight cracks. However, the small residence remained undamaged.

Unlike that of the guards, Tian Yang's pressure made Damien feel like an entire planet was being forced onto his back. He was doing everything in his power to hold himself back from kneeling.

With his own aura flaring to negate a portion of the pressure he was feeling, Damien raised his head and grinned maddeningly.

"Let's play then, old man."

Chapter 142 - First Lesson [4]

Boom-!

At the moment, two flashes of light were connecting in various locations along the width of the room. Each of their clashes resulted in an explosion that threatened to crack the sturdy floor they were fighting on.

From an outsider's perspective, it would be hard to even tell what was taking place to cause the bright flashes.

Damien raised his arm, punching forward with a light of spatial mana covering his fist. With each movement, he felt like he was shattering a piece of glass.

But instead of glass, it was the spatial layers in his vicinity that broke. The current fight wasn't taking place in the stability of the real plane but within its gaps.

It was previously explained that when Damien teleported, he connected the spatial layers of two different points and stepped through them, but in this fight, he was skipping the essential steps.

He stepped in between these layers and tried his best to track his opponent, but he wasn't doing too well. After all, his opponent didn't leave a single trace when he moved.

Boom-! Boom-!

Damien continued to throw punches, trying to force Tian Yang out in the open, but none of his attacks connected. The old man was simply too skilled at maneuvering through the folds of space.

Recently, Damien had almost completely forgone the usage of teleportation whilst in combat, and there was a very simple reason for this. He was unable to control the fluctuations of space when he emerged from within its folds.

At lower classes, this didn't matter much since people didn't have enough experience to deal with him even if they could sense the fluctuations, but that wasn't the same anymore.

If he had used teleportation in his fight against Long Chen, he would have been forced into a corner much quicker. He wouldn't have been able to react quickly enough while Long Chen would easily be able to attack before Damien even emerged totally.

This was a downside Damien had already accepted, and it led him to stop using the very first skill he earned, his short-distance teleportation. But everything changed when he first met Tian Yang.

The old man left no trace of himself after he disappeared. No physical clues, no lingering mana, and no fluctuations. This was something he truly admired, as he still hadn't figured out how to do it.

While he tried to observe Tian Yang's usage of space element, Damien clenched his palm into a fist before rotating it. Space followed his movements, distorting and cracking within a small radius of him.

With this, Tian Yang's figure was finally revealed. He was sitting leisurely in the air as if the entire fight was nothing to him. "You're finally making some progress, boy. But if you brute force your way through this, you won't learn a thing."

Tian Yang stepped forward, melding into the folds of space and disappearing once again.

Damien was feeling frustrated. He had already been at this for half an hour or more, but he wasn't able to learn anything. He knew that brute force wouldn't always be the answer, but he was letting his mind be clouded by his emotions.

So, he made the logical choice. Trying to emulate his moves from the forest earlier, Damien willed his emotions to enter the sphere of mana in his mind.

'Void Heart'

Entering this state, he only had one goal. Comprehend what Tian Yang was trying to teach him.

Damien's eyes lost their luster and became entirely emotionless. He slowly relaxed his posture, appearing entirely unbothered. Suddenly, he waved his arm to the right.

Bang-!

A projectile that was flying in his direction at untraceable speeds was flung away from his body. The vectors controlling its trajectory were entirely altered.

Looking in the direction it came from, Damien vanished. When he reappeared, he was 29 meters away from his original spot, punching toward the empty space in front of him.

Boom-!

His fist was caught by a much more powerful hand. “Although this method can be considered cheating, I applaud you for using everything in your arsenal. Now, continue.”

When Tian Yang vanished again, Damien calmly stood and watched with utmost concentration.

‘His movements are light. He wastes no motion while teleporting, not even causing ripples in the spatial layers.’

Tian Yang moved like a fish in water, while Damien was more like a caveman. He figured that his lack of familiarity with movement in space somewhat contributed to his inability to conceal himself.

‘Efficiency isn’t the same for every person. I have different means than his.’

Gaining such familiarity would take years of diligent practice, and that wasn’t what Damien was trying to do right now. He wanted an immediate solution to this problem.

‘In my arsenal, the best choice would be vectors.’

Vectors existed within everything. Even space itself could be said to contain countless vectors that coordinated its movements. When Damien learned vector control, he used space as a medium to manipulate vectors.

This time, he wanted to manipulate the vectors of the medium itself. If he could do this, negating the fluctuations shouldn’t be a problem at all.

The ability to control vectors gave Damien a wide range of options that he hadn’t completely explored yet. Among these was the ability to control magnitude.

Magnitude quite literally referred to the size or extent of something. Although space was ethereal rather than physical, it was the concept he felt most familiar with.

He didn’t re-enter the real plane for his experiment, opting to stay within the folds of space. He also stopped minding the fact that Tian Yang was still occasionally sending projectiles towards him to disrupt his concentration.

He erected his vector field to passively reflect any attacks that flew in his direction. Raising his arm once more, Damien began lightly flicking the air like he was playing an invisible guitar.

With each flick, ripples appeared in the space around him. He coated his fingers in spatial mana to create this effect. Slowly but surely, he tried to grasp the vectors that upheld the space in his vicinity.

On the other side of the room, Tian Yang watched Damien work. For the first few minutes, he still sent attacks to try and challenge Damien's concentration, but they were all deflected effortlessly.

Some of these attacks even reflected in Xue Ruyue's direction, forcing her to dodge and parry to the best of her ability. Since she wasn't able to see what was happening within the folds of space, she immediately became incensed, thinking it was being done on purpose.

'The powers this boy possesses are interesting, to say the least. This kind of force used to control trajectories and other forces related to an object wasn't something I learned until very late in my journey. Not to mention, his method is completely different.' Tian Yang thought.

He watched as Damien slowly lowered the strength of the ripples emanating from his finger, even though the amount of force and mana he used was the same.

'And his rate of comprehension is also nothing to scoff at. In only an hour he has grasped a method to emulate my usage of space laws.'

While Tian Yang was deep in thought, he stopped paying attention to Damien, making him miss the time when Damien paused his experiments and looked in his direction.

And while he continued to think, Damien vanished from his previous position, appearing silently in front of Tian Yang and punching out with all his strength.

Bang-!

Chapter 143 - First Lesson [5]

Currently, Damien's figure could be seen sprawled on the floor, virtually painted black and blue.

“Ugh...Master, was that really necessary?” He groaned, his pain evident in his expression.

“You’re the one who got cocky after landing a single hit. Did you think I wouldn’t teach you a lesson?” Tian Yang responded with a smirk.

After learning how to use magnitude manipulation to offset and minimize the fluctuations that occurred during teleportation, Damien immediately appeared in front of Tian Yang and landed a solid punch.

Since Tian Yang was lost in thought, he didn’t have time to block. His powerful body that was leagues ahead of Damien’s completely absorbed the punch, but he definitely lost face during the exchange.

And so, Tian Yang proceeded to lay down the law on Damien in a manner that he wasn’t even able to counter or block. Tian Yang would appear out of nowhere and disappear just as fast, beating Damien to a pulp.

He didn’t even use his raw strength as a Law Sea expert, only using 3rd class power to totally dominate the battle. The final result was the current scene.

While Damien waited for his body to regenerate, which felt like it was going much slower than it should, he caught sight of Xue Ruyue in the corner with a slight smirk on her face.

“What’re you laughing at?” He quipped, slowly sitting up.

Noticing that she was caught, she reverted to her icy expression before responding cluelessly, “what do you mean?”

‘This bitch!’ Damien thought. Still, he didn’t focus on her for long. His thoughts shifted to the previous exchange.

Not only did he learn how to teleport silently once again, which would be immensely useful in battle, but he also gained the realization that he had barely scratched the surface of what he could do with his vector control.

There wasn’t even a real lesson involved, rather it was a showcase of prowess that let Damien learn by feeling it himself. He definitely appreciated this method of teaching.

Though, he didn’t think that was all he would receive. At least, he hoped so. He wasn’t a masochist to enjoy having this kind of lesson too often.

While Damien was digesting his gains, Tian Yang suddenly spoke up. “Do you know what the two main affinities necessary to practice our sect’s divination arts are?”

Damien looked up. “Why would I know that? I just got here.”

Not minding the sarcasm in his tone, Tian Yang continued. “It’s a rare thing for someone to appear in the world with control over the two elements naturally. Most of our elders who practice divination only gained small amounts of inherited comprehension from their predecessors.”

Even Xue Ruyue began paying attention at this point. The divination techniques of the sect weren’t made available to disciples, so she was naturally curious about their workings.

“Divination is an odd profession. It allows one to see into the future, but never more than the heavens permit. It can even allow one to gaze into the past or gain a deeper understanding of the present.

“In summary, there is a reason why the term Seers is used when referring to those who practice this branch of arts. The main power of divination is to see through the fabric of reality.”

Panning his gaze between his two disciples that were listening with rapt attention, Tian Yang spoke once again. “As for the two main elements necessary for divination? They are space and time.”

“A Seer at the peak of their power is said to peer through space and locate anyone or anything they desire. They can also peer through time and decide which path would be best to achieve their goals.

“This kind of power is always frowned upon by others since it gives a seer nigh omnipotence in that aspect.

“At one point in time, people even banded together, attempting to eradicate all those who practiced divination techniques, but they were unsuccessful.

“Those seers also gathered, forming the beginning of what would later become our Celestial Star Palace.”

Damien was intrigued by the topic and raised a question. “So why is it Celestial Star Palace? What correlation does that have to the Seers?”

Tian Yang smiled and answered him patiently. “It’s simple. The legacy of those seers can only be inherited by a limited number of people, so an entire sect formed on their foundations was close to impossible.

“But they looked to divination for the answer, and according to legend, they all saw the same prophecy. It was a scene that began and ended with stars. A massive cosmos formed by unknown means. However, before they could witness any more, they met with heaven’s wrath.

“Looking too far into the secrets of the universe, or important events that will change the flow of fate and destiny causes immense backlash for those who wish to know too much.

“Of those thousands of seers, around 80% of them immediately lost their eyesight, becoming permanently blinded. Even the most valuable healing pills were unable to solve the problem. The rest who got off lucky were nearly crippled, unable to use divination techniques ever again.

“It was their punishment from the heavens.”

“And what is this concept of the heavens?” Damien pressed. He had heard the term many times since arriving on the Cloud Plane, and even more in novels he previously read. Yet, none of them explained exactly what the heavens are.

“You don’t even know that much” Xue Ruyue interjected with disdain. “Even the smallest of children know about the mighty heavens. Where were you raised? In some filthy mountain by beasts?”

However, before Damien could vent his rage back, Tian Yang began calmly explaining. “The heavens are...well the heavens are everything. They are natural law, the law of the universe, the overseer of existence, and many more.

“The heavens manifest themselves in various ways that us mortals cannot comprehend. The holographic window that appears before us at birth and quantifies our power is one of the heavens’ many faces.

“Another is the Heavenly Tribulation that descends when one enters Law Connection realm.”

“Heavenly Tribulation?!” Damien exclaimed. He didn’t need an explanation about those, but he had no idea they actually existed. The system had shown signs of sentience before, being aware of every individual’s progress and recording their legends, but he didn’t think it’d manifest physically.

“That’s right. Upon entering 4th class, there is an extremely large change that an individual will go through. To deem one worthy of such change, the heavens enact a tribulation for them to pass.

“If they fail the tribulation, they die. And if they pass, they are allowed to continue their path to strength.

“Not only that, but it is also fabled that upon entering the demigod realm, one experiences an even greater tribulation to shed their mortal body. It is the final step towards gaining divinity.”

Damien was in awe at this information. He finally realized how fast the universe was. How much power people could hold. He felt ashamed of himself for being proud of his measly strength in the grand scheme.

‘There is always a peak above the peak.’ He felt that this old saying was truly apt.

But he swore on everything he knew and loved. One day he would reach the highest peak. The one that looked down upon all creation in contempt.

Chapter 144 - Mission [1]

“Master, do you mind doing me a favor?” Damien asked tentatively. He wanted to see something. Or rather, he wanted a reminder that he was still weak.

Tian Yang raised his brow in intrigue. “We won’t know until you ask.”

“Then, can you release your full aura? I want to feel the true power of a Law Sea realm expert.”

Tian Yang hesitated slightly but nodded his head nonetheless. “Very well. If I released my entire aura, it wouldn’t be a surprise for you to sustain critical injury or even die, so I will release just the amount that I feel you can handle.”

He then turned to Xue Ruyue and beckoned her over. “You come too. It’ll be a good learning experience.”

Although she didn’t understand why, she still walked over as she was told. With both of his disciples in front of him, Tian Yang’s face became serious.

“When it feels like your body can’t handle it, release your own aura. At that point, I will be able to gauge your upper limit.”

Without another word, Tian Yang shifted his entire presence. Rather than the teacher and old man he was previously, he now gave off a domineering light like an emperor.

Before either Damien or Xue Ruyue understood what was happening, everything in their vision became black.

The murky darkness filled the entire room, and it seemed to be emanating from a single spot, Tian Yang.

As he exerted more and more of his aura, the blackness thickened, and the pressure the two felt increased steadily. It reached the point where neither of them were able to confidently stand on their feet anymore.

Thump-!

The sound of knees impacting the ground could be heard as the aura suppression continued to climb. Damien still wasn't using his aura to alleviate any of the burden, so his knees could no longer hold on.

Space began to crack purely due to the weight of the aura. The sturdy interior of the house that didn't even show signs of damage when Damien and Tian Yang sparred earlier began creaking like it was rusty and decrepit.

And then, the aura flared.

Damien felt something he hadn't felt in a long time. It was to the point where he almost forgot the feeling entirely. It filled his being, it froze his body, his mind went blank, and he began sweating profusely. It was the most basic instinct of a human

It was a primal fear that prevailed when all hope was lost.

‘What is this?’ Damien could no longer think straight. The idea of using his aura to counter the suppression didn’t even enter his mind. He was utterly terrified.

Xue Ruyue wasn’t any better. She was also on the ground, shivering as if her body was submerged in the coldest of temperatures.

As a member of the Xue clan, one of the 4 great clans, she was someone who was always surrounded by powerful people. She had seen more Law Connection and Law Sea realm beings than she could count on her hands.

Yet, she had never seen them exert all their strength. There had never been an altercation that forced them to do so.

There was a treaty in place by the 4 great clans that she never understood until today. It only had one clause.

“Law Sea realm experts are not to be mobilized unless a clan is facing threat of extinction. Conflict between 4th class members must take place in an area secluded from civilization.”

But she understood it now. If this kind of power was ever mobilized as an attack near a city...that city would be demolished in seconds.

Watching his two disciples, Tian Yang began to slowly walk forward.

‘Escape. I need to escape.’ Damien’s mind revolved trying to think of a way to escape the scenario, but his rational thinking was impaired. His skin began to crack and blood leaked out of his pores.

Without his conscious thought, his aura began to release itself. But it wasn’t the usual amethyst color. It was blood red like the time he fought the sea dragon.

His irises began swirling, the two colors contained within them battling for supremacy. The scene was like ouroboros, a snake eating its own tail.

But the red color was winning. His cross-shaped pupils spun wildly before elongating into a reptilian slit, his irises becoming completely blood red.

His emotions were forced into the Mind Prison subconsciously, as he couldn’t handle the strain they had on his brain anymore.

All the while, the pressure kept increasing. Xue Ruyue had already tapped out, using the last of her sanity to forfeit, so all the pressure in the room was being directed towards Damien with pinpoint accuracy.

Xue Ruyue watched from the side with lingering fear evident in her eyes. Even if the pressure wasn’t directed at her, she could still feel its immense might.

Damien felt like an entire cosmos was dropped on his back. He felt like he was carrying the sky itself. But now that his emotions were locked away, his rational mind was able to regain control.

Or at least, it should have been. But the blood-red aura around Damien indicated something different.

His teeth and nails elongated into fangs and claws, the muscles in his legs pulsated with power, two protrusions were trying their best to make their way out of his skull, and the same was happening on his back. Pitch black scales appeared and disappeared beneath his skin.

Tian Yang was of the mind to stop releasing his aura a long time ago, but seeing the changes happening within Damien, he continued to press him. He wanted to see where this led.

But fate had different plans.

“AARRGH!”

Damien let out a howl of pain. His eyes began bleeding, and with the other changes taking place in his body, it made him look like a demonic being.

His muscles spasmed as his body continued attempting to change, but something was holding it back. If Damien was sane, he'd immediately know what it was. His bloodline simply wasn't completed yet.

‘Interesting.’ Tian Yang thought to himself. ‘A beast that even the Void Heart Scriptures cannot contain. The boy has been cultivating it within him all this time.’

Feeling that it was enough, Tian Yang began lowering the pressure he exerted. This gave the bestial Damien a chance to rage.

“ROOOAAARRR!”

With a guttural roar, he charged at Tian Yang. There was no use of elements nor techniques, just pure physical strength.

However, just this was enough to cause spiderweb cracks to form in the ground beneath him.

His speeds reached an entirely new height that almost rivaled teleportation, appearing in front of his opponent in a flash.

But his opponent this time wasn't someone he could mess with.

“Sleep.”

Tian Yang's hand looked like it only made a slight movement, but in the next instant, Damien was pounded into the floor.

The motion was so abrupt that the velocity he gained from his charge contributed to the strength of his fall, breaking through the sturdy floors of the house and causing him to directly fall unconscious.

Looking at Damien, whose figure was returning to normal now that he was asleep, Tian Yang let out a slight chuckle.

“I wonder what other secrets this boy is hiding.”

Chapter 145 - Mission [2]

When Damien opened his eyes, he found himself on yet another familiar bed. In the past few weeks, he had already been through this routine more times than he had since arriving at the Cloud Plane.

But this time, his memory wasn't as foggy. He was painfully aware of what caused him to enter such a state. 'First of all, damn that old man is powerful.'

It wasn't just the terrifying aura that made Damien say this, though that definitely contributed. The aura he felt wasn't what he expected at all.

With his experience so far, he thought that a Law Sea realm aura might be enough to bring him to his knees, but he didn't expect it to be enough to instill such primal fear into the core of his being.

'And that was just the aura he could release without killing me...'

He remembered the old man's words before they even started, and he now wholeheartedly believed them. If the old man hadn't made his move with his disciples' safety in mind, they would have died without even knowing how.

Damien realized that in his journey thus far, all the 4th class beings he met were friendly. He now had another instance he could consider he survived purely based on luck.

The other thing in Damien's mind was what happened to him under that intense suppression.

‘That was like...beast mode?’

He couldn’t think of a better word to describe it. It wasn’t like his traits became more prominent, but the most prominent parts of his bloodline fought for supremacy while trying to emerge from his body.

His horns, scales, eyes, and even the wings that almost came out were all evidently draconic, but his legs and fangs were part of his original wolf bloodline.

He had no idea how the bloodline he first gained during his fall in the dungeon could compete with that of a literal dragon, but he didn’t question it. In the first place, he didn’t have enough knowledge of what was going on to question it.

“Oh, you’re finally up.” A disdainful voice suddenly snapped Damien out of his thoughts. Though, he did notice that it contained less hostility than before.

Standing up from the bed, Damien responded without looking over. “How long has it been since I passed out?”

“3 hours.” Xue Ruyue said. However, her face soon turned bright red for a moment before she turned away. “And put some clothes on, idiot.”

Only then did Damien realize why he felt so breezy. He was only wearing his underwear, his other clothes getting torn to shreds in the previous events.

“Oh.” Damien didn’t think much of it. If he could spend 2 years running around naked in a dungeon of beasts, this much was nothing.

Putting on a new set of clothes, Damien turned to look at his senior sister who he didn't have a good impression of. Still, her decreased hostility did make him consider changing his mind.

He would just reciprocate the attitude he received. It was that simple. "Is there anything for me to do?"

Xue Ruyue shook her head. "Master had some things to take care of, so he left you here. Until he calls you again, you are free to do as you wish."

"Alright, until next time then." Without waiting for a response, Damien warped back to his living quarters in the outer court.

Looking at the now empty space where he once stood, Xue Ruyue's eyes became complicated. Still, she simply sighed before turning away and continuing her day.

A few days passed since Damien's first lesson, and he had spent the time resting in his dorm. For a first time, he felt that he had benefitted immensely from his master's teachings.

In these last few days, Damien tried to imitate the partial transformation he incurred previously, but to no avail. He could feel a trigger within his body, but he couldn't activate it.

He visited the Grand Library to try and understand this phenomenon, but he couldn't find much information. It wasn't that humans with beast transformations or beast bloodlines were too rare, but he didn't have access to get the appropriate information.

All he could figure out was that it was normal for humans with beast bloodlines to inherit their abilities. For instance, someone with dragon bloodline inheriting their flame control or breath wasn't too rare.

As for transformations, they were a higher level of this inheriting. But for Damien it was different. He didn't have the bloodline of an existing beast, rather he had a bloodline made by devouring those of other beasts continually.

It was like he was forging a new path the way beasts did when they reached 4th class. If he manages to heighten his bloodline to its peak, he might even become part divine beast.

He mused that this was something anyone with the evolver title had the privilege of doing. The title was what granted him the ability to practice the evolution system of beasts along with the normal cultivation system of humans.

But considering the fact that he never met another evolver, they must be somewhat rare.

After his trip to the library, Damien was once again of the mind to be active. The hard truth of how weak he was on a grand scale made his drive to grow stronger burn all the more brightly. And with that in mind, made his way to the mission hall.

Entering the large hall, he went straight to the mission board. There were 3 different branches of missions one could take.

Minor, mid-level, and major missions.

The minor missions were simple collection missions or errands for the sect. Long-term occupations like guard duty were also included in these. To complete the mission quota, one would need to occupy guard duty for an entire year without pause.

As for the mid-level missions, they were things like hunting beasts that were plaguing certain areas or killing some wicked cultivators who were terrorizing people. For missions in this level, one was required to complete 10 a year if they solely relied on them.

As for the major missions, only 3 a year were necessary to fill out the mission quota. And naturally, their difficulty matched this small number.

Major missions were always complicated. Eradicating an entire wicked power, aiding kingdoms in overthrowing coupes, and other things like that.

These requests always came from more high-profile people in society who wanted to get things done without moving personally.

These missions were also the only ones that weren't limited to the Central Continent. The Central Continent was essentially the overseer of the entire Cloud Plane, and the major sects had a duty of keeping peace and providing aid when necessary.

These major missions were always shared between the 5 major sects, each having their own protocols and areas they managed.

And with the scale being so big, these missions usually required a party to complete rather than a single person.

But Damien still went straight for these missions. He wanted to participate in something big like this and was searching for something he could do alone.

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Help the Xiang Family eliminate their opposition and take the throne.

Location: Southern Continent

Strength required: Core Formation realm

Reward: 2000 Spirit Stones

===

Damien looked at this one, but he disregarded it quickly. He didn't want to get embroiled in political drama that could come back to bite him.

He continued scouring the wall, looking for something more straightforward, before his gaze landed on a certain sheet of paper.

===

Eradicate the wicked power, Beguiled Devil Sect, who has been terrorizing the Shentian province.

Location: Northern Continent

Strength required: Core Foundation Realm

Reward: 2500 Spirit Stones

Chapter 146 - Mission [3]

When Damien reached out to grab the mission, he was met with another hand. As it turns out, someone else wanted it as well.

Turning to look at the owner of the hand, Damien was pleasantly surprised. “Who would’ve thought we’d run into each other like this.”

When he thought about it, it actually wasn’t so surprising that they would end up in this situation. There were very few missions meant for Core Expansion realm since most that reached this level already made their way to the inner court.

And even though neither Long Chen nor Damien was at the Core Expansion realm, their combat prowess made it so missions meant for Core Formation realm cultivators wouldn’t pressure them the same way.

“Indeed,” the black-haired man responded, “it seems fate continues to push us together.”

Damien merely smiled at this. He still wasn't entirely convinced about the existence of such a thing as fate. "So? What are we going to do about this?" Damien asked, gesturing towards the mission.

"Hmm, our duel ended in a tie, so it's no use fighting over it. At the end of the day, it was meant to be taken on in groups, so why don't we do it together?"

In fact, Damien had the same idea. He just wanted to prod at Long Chen and see if he was of the same mind. He just hadn't expected Long Chen to be so forward with it.

"Alright then. I've been wanting some excitement, so this should be fun."

Damien grabbed the sheet of paper off the wall and the two of them headed towards the registration desk to see one of the elders.

When the mission hall elder saw the mission the two of them planned to take, he looked at them like they were a bunch of fools.

"You know this mission is well above your puny levels, right? If you go, you will inevitably die."

"It matters not." Long Chen said. "We chose this mission well aware of the risks. A warning now means nothing."

When the mission hall elder looked at Damien, he also nodded, expressing his agreement.

Sighing, the elder took out a stamp and pressed it onto the paper. “Alright then, I won’t say anything else. The mission has been claimed by you and will remain that way for the next 6 months. If you haven’t returned by that time, you will be declared dead.”

Damien and Long Chen nodded at the elder before leaving the hall. The rest of the information they’d need would be directly transmitted to their disciple tokens.

“Oh, that reminds me. Did you end up finding a master?” Damien mentioned.

“Right. I did find myself a master. Her name is Elder Xiao Xun and she is a genius with the sword. I believe that under her guidance I will be able to learn much.”

Damien nodded. Even from their first interaction, he could tell Long Chen’s interest in the sword. Meanwhile, for him it was just a means to an end.

He never chose to be a sword cultivator. If the first weapon he found in the dungeon was a spear, that would have been his path instead.

But he didn’t hate the sword. It had effective reach and also cutting power. It was basically the most balanced weapon. That’s why it was also the most commonly used.

“Anyway, let’s meet back up tomorrow in the same spot. After that, we can make our way to the Northern Continent.”

Long Chen nodded before splitting up from Damien. He clearly wasn’t a man of many words, and Damien respected that.

It wasn't like the two automatically became friends after a single duel. Both had their own pride and goals. It could be said that their relationship was more one of mutual respect, which was why they took the mission together.

After warping back to his dorm, Damien withdrew his disciple token to check the mission details.

===

Eradicate the wicked power, Beguiled Devil Sect, who has been terrorizing the Shentian province.

The Beguiled Devil Sect is a mid-sized power in the Western Region of the Northern continent. In recent months, they have been becoming more active, using their vile means to terrorize the Shentian province.

Their focus is devil arts, which consume the life force of others to grant them power. The art has a side effect of turning them into bloodthirsty beasts, struggling to retain their sanity if they do not consume life force.

It is suspected that this struggle has become more severe recently, causing the disciples of this sect to wantonly kill innocent civilians at a much more frequent rate for their life force.

The Shentian province is ruled by the Shen clan, whose strength is almost on par with the Beguiled Devil Sect, but if they move, they will lose too many experts in the crossfire.

The Shen Clan has hired help from the sects in the Central Continent to raid and demolish the wicked sect; putting an end to their deeds.

===

After that, some more information about the general power structure and strength of the Beguiled Devil Sect was listed, along with more information they would need when the time comes.

From this, Damien could grasp one thing with certainty. This world was truly ruled by strength. It was mentioned that the rate the Beguiled Devil Sect disciples were consuming the life force of the innocent had increased, not that it had started.

It was clear that the wicked sect had been plundering life force from the common populace of this region and others for quite some time, but the fact that they were generally indiscreet made it so the major powers didn't care much.

Everyone was selfish, and that selfishness was even more pronounced in the Cloud Plane. Now that the activities of the wicked power were brought to light, they were forced to deal with it. Otherwise, they'd lose credibility in the eyes of their people.

And in turn, this would make them lose face and power. These were the two most important concepts to cultivators, whose pride tended to be higher than the heavens.

But Damien wasn't any better. Although he understood that these righteous powers were only representatives of good on the surface, that wasn't his business. He cared for strength, and he cared for those close to him.

He was reminded of Rose at this moment. Ever since they separated, he hadn't been staying still at all. It was a part of his personality to constantly move, but perhaps he was also avoiding a certain feeling he recognized.

It was loneliness. He had gotten so used to sharing a bed with Rose and seeing her in the morning when he woke up. He had gotten used to the idle conversation they would always have.

Even if he had Zara, who he talked to and joked with frequently, it was different. Zara was closer to a little sister to him, while his bond with Rose was something more special.

He knew that pushing her away was his own decision, but that didn't mean he didn't regret it. He was running from his problems like he always did. That's all there was to it.

Shaking his head, Damien got rid of those depressing thoughts. Starting tomorrow, he would be on a new adventure. He just needed to put his focus on that.

Chapter 147 - Supreme Fairy Paradise [1]

A few thousand kilometers away from the Celestial Star Palace, there was an area that looked like a natural heaven.

There was no visible human interference in the area, and even beasts that were ever-present within nature were absent. It was a pure ecosystem of thriving plant life.

The trees reached for the heavens, being tens of kilometers in height, their foliage blocking out almost all sunlight that tried to pass through.

Yet even with the lack of sunlight, the plant life below them thrived. Lush green grass taller than the average human covered the jungle-like terrain, vines swung from tree to tree, connecting the entire

ecosystem, and beautiful flowers bloomed in every direction, painting the ground in a myriad of colors.

Within this unblemished environment, many green and white motes of light could be seen. But if one was close enough to make out their features, they'd find bodies that were oddly humanoid.

The only difference was that these creatures had crystalline wings on their backs that fluttered with their every motion. They danced and frolicked in the air without a care in the world. And naturally, all these creatures were female.

As they danced and played, some of these creatures migrated through a certain area within the jungle, the air around them shimmering as they did so. It was as if they passed into another world.

And indeed, the changing of the scenery around them attested to this fact. Rather than the continuation of the beautiful jungle that should have been there, they entered an area filled with large fertile plains and beautiful architecture.

These buildings spanned for many kilometers, painting the sight of a beautiful city that was even bigger than the Star City that resided in the Celestial Star Sect.

The buildings in this city looked as if they were made of the most polished glass and marble, giving the illusion of complete transparency. Yet, oddly enough, no matter how hard one tried they wouldn't be able to see into these buildings.

And at the very end of this expansive city stood a palace that didn't lose out in the slightest to the one on Star Mountain. And while that palace gave off a mystical aura that enhanced its profundity, this one was more ethereal and lofty.

Lining the streets of this city, one could see women of all different origins. They chatted happily and enjoyed the safety of their home while going about their daily lives. Just like the ranks of those fairy-like creatures, there were no men among them.

This was the Supreme Fairy Paradise. It was a haven for women who wanted to be surrounded by their own, away from the struggles that plagued a patriarchal society.

This sect was actually one of the leading powers in abolishing that system, with women gaining great power that stands equal to those men at the top.

The Supreme Fairy Paradise actually had a very cordial relationship with the Celestial Star Palace, with both having a woman at their head and advocating for power to be given to those who earned it, regardless of gender.

At this point in the Cloud Plane's history, women didn't suffer as much when it came to this sort of problem, as many capable women have risen through the ranks and proven their qualifications, but in the grand scheme, there were still many problems to be solved.

The number of fairies and jade beauties among the ranks of the Supreme Fairy Paradise wasn't small at all. After all, beauty didn't come accompanied by status.

Those whose background couldn't protect them from those young masters of larger clans always migrated towards places like this sect, gaining them protection as well as a place to gain strength for themselves.

Personal strength always mattered more than background, and this was the main goal of most who joined this sect.

Of course, being a major sect, not everyone within it was there for such noble reasons. Some were simply progressing their own selfish agendas, as was the norm in the Cloud Plane.

Within one of the beautiful crystalline buildings in the city, two women could be seen holding conversation.

They both had looks that rivaled the top beauties in the sect, yet they had only recently joined. One had blue hair and matching eyes, while the other had pink hair and ruby eyes.

Their features were defined through many years of training, and the muscle they had built through combat only served to heighten their natural beauty.

The disciple examination for the Supreme Fairy Paradise took place in another random location, with those who passed being teleported to the sect afterward via artifact.

Its contents weren't anything special, almost mirroring that of the Celestial Star Palace with only a few changes. It was natural considering the relationship the two sects had.

As for Rose and Elena, they were easily able to pass. Especially when they worked together, not many of the new cultivators entertaining the sect stood a chance.

"We've been here for a few weeks already, but we haven't done anything eventful. I was really hoping I could advance to 3rd class soon." Elena said with a sigh.

“You can’t be blamed for this, though. The sect elders have been using this time to observe the newest batch of disciples and choose who they wish to foster.” Rose comforted.

“That’s true...I heard it’s not just our sect that’s doing this. There must be something big coming around the horizon.”

“Right, there’s also that secret realm entrance that is supposed to take place. There must be some sort of event after that which requires a lot of talented people.”

Unlike the Celestial Star Palace who kept their motives hidden, the Supreme Fairy Paradise was quite open with their disciples about the elders’ decisions and discussions.

Naturally, there was a reason for this. As the name implies, the sect was much more secluded from worldly affairs compared to the other 4 great sects.

The women in the sect rarely left its confines, and although there were certain rules in place enforcing this, it was mainly due to their own decisions.

“How about we take a mission, then?” Rose suddenly suggested.

Elena fell into thought. Missions here worked in a similar way to those in the Celestial Star Palace, and they were some of the only opportunities the women of the sect had to leave its premises.

“Yeah, a mission would be best right now. However, we know nothing about the world yet. Let’s just take some mid-level missions for beast hunting so I can catch up to you guys.”

Rose nodded. This was her goal as well. She had been viewing Elena as a rival since their first battle before infiltrating Niflheim, but they were never truly able to compete.

This was because Elena hadn't reached Rose's level yet. No matter how hard she tried, in a serious competition, she wouldn't stand a chance.

It was simply the difference in league that a class change brought. Although it wasn't too defined between 2nd and 3rd class, it was still a qualitative change.

Making this decision, the girls promptly left their residence and headed for the mission hall.

Chapter 148 - Supreme Fairy Paradise [2]

Walking down the streets of the sect, the girls took their time to enjoy the view. The peaceful atmosphere here was something they particularly liked, and due to the fact that they had only recently joined the sect, they didn't have to worry about any conflict.

Not to mention, neither of them had accepted a master yet. It wasn't that they were picky about it or that no elder was interested in them, it was just that the number of geniuses who joined the sect during this disciple examination was too great.

This led the elders to take careful consideration of their choices of disciple. The competition was especially fierce. However, none of the girls fought each other during this vetting process. They didn't want to make a bad impression on their potential teachers.

When the girls reached the mission hall, they went straight to the section indicating mid-level missions. Rose didn't particularly need to partake in anything like this yet, but she wanted to support Elena.

The two had decided to stick together even when they were apart from Damien, who was the main connection point between them. They were stronger this way, and the bond they had forged in the almost full year they had known each other wasn't shallow.

While looking over the missions, however, they couldn't find anything interesting enough to grab their attention.

===

Kill a Tyrant Hawk and bring back its egg.

Location: Xuan Mountain Range

Strength required: Elemental Comprehension Realm

Reward: 300 Spirit Stones.

===

Kill a Venomous Eclipse Snake and bring back its poison sack.

Location: Xuan Mountain Range

Strength required: Core Formation Realm

Reward: 600 Spirit Stones.

===

The missions relating to beasts all had the same premise of killing the beast and bringing back a certain item or ingredient in its possession. While these were an easy source of spirit stones for them, it wasn't their goal.

Elena was infinitely close to reaching 3rd class, with her level being 95, but a single beast wouldn't do the job. Even if she could stay within the Xuan Mountain Range and hunt other beasts to reach her goal, she wanted to maximize the benefits.

Feeling curious, Elena went over to the section for major missions. These were much more riveting and even captured her excitement.

She saw some missions that had to do with overthrowing coupes and even saw the one Damien took in the Northern Continent to eliminate a wicked sect. However, these weren't the ones that caught her eye.

===

Aid the Yulong province in repelling a large beast tide plaguing its citizens.

Location: Yulong Province

Strength required: Core Formation Realm

Reward: 1000 Spirit Stones.

===

‘A beast tide is perfect.’ Elena thought. Not only would there be a plethora of experience for her to gain, but she would also get a much larger amount of spirit stones than any mid-level mission would provide.

Tearing the paper off the board, Elena met back up with Rose and showed it to her, who naturally had no reason to refuse.

“Alright, this mission will be taken by others as well, so we won’t reserve it for you. However, your participation has been accepted. A fairy will accompany you as a guide, so be sure to meet her on your way out of the sect.

After getting the stamp of approval from a Mission Hall Elder, the girls left the premises.

The Supreme Fairy Paradise didn’t just get its name from the all-women nature of the sect. It was also due to the fairies they shared their home with.

These fairies tended to be playful and carefree within the jungle area, but they were a completely different beast outside.

Their small stature and delicate appearance have fooled many a greedy cultivator who has tried to capture them, but their power wasn't a joke by any means.

The fairy race was inherently close with nature, and mana is as natural as one could get. Due to this, even the weakest fairies were created at the Elemental Comprehension Realm.

That's right, fairies weren't born, they were created. There was no way for a race that strictly bore females to conceive in the first place. Instead, fairies were born through natural accumulation of nature mana and plant life.

For example, the fairies that shared their home with the Supreme Fairy Paradise were representatives of the towering trees that made up the jungle.

Trees were odd beings even in a mana-filled world. Even plants could gain human form if they cultivated to the appropriate level, but it wasn't like that for trees.

They could gain sentience, but due to their unusual natural life span, the process was extremely slow. Besides that, trees were stationary and without the ability to gain experience naturally.

Plants could become carnivorous, or take advantage of the symbiotic relationship they had with animals and bugs to gain experience, however, trees didn't have this privilege.

Still, they were able to maintain their standing among the population of sentient flora due to their ability to project consciousness onto other beings. In this case, the fairy race became their representatives.

As the fairies grew in cultivation, the trees would grow with them, and as the trees passively absorbed mana and converted sunlight into mana, the fairies' mana pools would increase.

It was a true symbiotic relationship.

The Supreme Fairy Paradise also did what it could to protect the ecosystem that was cultivated in this jungle. It was the reason the entire place lacked beasts, the only creatures besides their population being regular animals.

The fairies weren't ungrateful, so they also helped the sect. With the relationship spanning since the origin of the sect, the bond these fairies had with the maidens of the sect was generally unbreakable.

There was even precedence of a maiden and fairy becoming close enough to form an equal contract like the one Damien and Zara had. In this way, they would become the closest one could be without sharing an intimate relationship.

Being guides and protectors for the disciples that left the sect was also something the fairies took upon themselves. The Core Formation and Expansion realm fairies tended to take this job, as the ones in the Law Connection and Law Sea stages actually had the option of gaining an elder or advisor position within the sect itself.

A day quickly passed by as the girls made their way to the entrance of the sect. Once there, a shining light rushed in front of them.

When the light died down a bit, the figure within was revealed. This small fairy had shining blonde hair and green eyes, almost looking like a miniaturized elf.

“Hello, girls! My name is Dia!” The fairy said while happily fluttering around them.

“The mana around you is so excited! You must be special people!”

The girls couldn’t help but smile, infected by her cheerful attitude.

“My name is Rose and this is Elena, we’ll be happy to work with you on this mission.”

Día smiled happily as they continued talking, leaving the premises of the sect. However, they didn’t end up in the same jungle, instead being teleported to a random location.

As the girls continued chatting with Dia, they made their way to the location of the beast tide.

Chapter 149 - Coincidence? [1]

The waves of the Cloud Sea ebbed and flowed peacefully, seemingly unperturbed by the countless struggles and fights taking place under its surface. Occasionally, the scaly or smooth backs of the beasts that reside within it would peak out before once again submerging.

However, the calm environment was soon broken by two streaks of light, one black and the other red, speeding across the air above it. The powerful auras they emitted caused the waves to tumble tumultuously, but they were long gone by the time it happened.

Currently, Damien and Long Chen had almost reached the shores of the Northern Continent, having traveled for many days without rest. This wasn't a problem for Zara, and apparently, Long Chen's beast felt the same.

Damien had only found out about it on the day of their departure, but it should've been obvious considering how his partner on this mission was the scion of one of the four great clans.

He had a Draconic beast that looked like a fire-attribute variant of the sea dragon he met when he was first crossing the Cloud Sea. Its species name wasn't as presumptuous as the snake from before either.

Ironically, its given name was Little Flame.

As the two men and their beasts continued moving across the expansive sea, the outline of a massive landmass came into their view.

The Western Continent Damien first appeared in was covered in vast plains and deserts with sandy shores, the Central Continent had cliffs and an array of different terrains, and as for this Northern Continent, it was covered in a blanket of white.

Snow as far as the eye could see, with the shore being more of an icecap than anything else. This was the first impression of the northern continent.

It didn't take long for the two to land on the white plains and take a small break after their long journey.

"The Shentian province is much farther inland than this. According to the map from our disciple tokens, it should take another 3 days travel at this pace to reach it." Long Chen said as he surveyed the surroundings.

As someone from the Central Continent, not to mention one of its top powers, he had never felt the need to leave its ground. This was the first time he had ever left, and the first time he had seen snow before. It was obvious that he would take a moment to admire it.

"3 more days isn't a problem for us. But we should hurry in case the raid already started. If we miss it, we might automatically fail this mission." Damien mentioned.

Along with the general details of the mission, they received information that the Shen clan that ruled the Shentian province was executing a raid on the Beguiled Devil Sect soon, however, no specific date was mentioned.

If the raid started before they arrived and the wicked sect extermination was completed, they traveled all this way for nothing.

"Zara, can you continue?" Damien asked with concern. She had been flying for over a week without pause already, and he didn't want to push her too far. Not to mention, she might have to fight in the upcoming raid.

However, Zara was quick to ease his concerns. "Mm! I can even fly for weeks without getting tired!" She exclaimed while raising her head, trying to look tough.

Damien chuckled a bit but nodded his head anyway. “Alright, since the strongest wolf in the world can fly for so long, I don’t need to be worried.”

Seeing that Long Chen had also mounted his beast once more, Damien gave the okay and they once again set off flying.

Meanwhile, Rose and Elena also arrived at their destination.

The Yulong province was closer to the eastern coast of the Central Continent, under the jurisdiction of the Long Clan. However, the Long Clan controlled too much area to personally oversee every province, so they delegated the duty to their subordinate clans.

As for this region, it was managed by the Wang Clan.

The Yulong province itself was nothing special, with similar scenery to the other areas around it. The eastern region of the continent was mostly plains and forests, which was why it was plagued by beast tides more often than others.

The current tide was centered around Jia City, near the edges of the province. This city directly bordered one of the massive forests, which made it something akin to a first stronghold against the constant tides that would exit.

As for the source of the tides, nobody was able to figure it out. Many 3rd class beasts would partake in the stampede, making it obvious that those in the same class would die if they tried to investigate.

And this notion was further solidified by the fact that any 3rd class individual who entered the forest always failed to return.

As for 4th class beings, they had bigger priorities than things like this. Beast tides were too common and had a various number of factors that could trigger them, so it was pointless to investigate any specific area.

Rose and Elena materialized outside the gates of Jia City with the help of their fairy companion, Día, and directly entered its walls.

With their robes as Supreme Fairy Paradise disciples, no other identification was needed. After all, impersonating one of the 5 major sects was nothing more than courting death.

Once they entered the city, however, the first thing that greeted them was the smell of blood. It was thicker and more pungent than anywhere else they'd been but a single place, the Niflheim research center.

Actually, the feeling of familiarity between these two places didn't end there. The cultivators that tended to their wounds on the sides of the roads had clear indications of corrosion on their skin, and the smell of blood slowly became infected with something else as well.

"I have a bad feeling about this," Elena said as she warily glanced around. This mission might have been classified as a major one, but this sort of environment wasn't something the sect would usually send their disciples into without warning them first.

In fact, even Día looked slightly perturbed. Her nose wrinkled at the smell in the atmosphere and disgust was evident on her face as she glanced around.

Luckily enough, she was small enough to go unnoticed by those around her.

Rose narrowed her eyes as she observed the surroundings. Unlike the other two who simply had a faint feeling, it was different for her.

A cultivator's intuition couldn't be ignored. With the heightening of their league with every rank up, even something like intuition always stemmed from a foundation of immense perception ability.

But nothing was absolute without proof. Proof which presented itself in the form of ethereal strings in Rose's vision.

Red strings were love, blue strings were trust, yellow strings were wariness, and grey strings were neutral. These were the main colors that Rose would see on a day-to-day basis.

But in her vision right now, it was a field of black. Black strings that connected to every wounded cultivator in the vicinity and led to an unknown place.

She hadn't seen these black strings enough to be certain about their purpose, but she had a faint guess.

These black strings...they were death.

Chapter 150 - Coincidence? [2]

“Welcome to our Dalia City.”

It didn't take long after Damien and Long Chen arrived at the city for someone to come greet them. Unlike the situation on the girls' side, everything here was still tame.

As the two men arrived further towards the center of the continent, the snowy plains gave way to a more mountainous region filled with large landmarks of ice.

These natural landmarks were shaped in such unique formations that they truly seemed man-made, but it was clear that it wasn't the case.

As for the cities in this region, most of them were built into the rough mountain terrain or within the safety of the deep valleys between them.

The Northern Continent was subject to a perpetual winter as well as winds that further decreased the cold, making it difficult for mortals to live here.

As for those that did, they came from tribes or lineages that evolved over time to be accustomed to cold. Due to this, the population of this continent tended to have a more rugged and muscular build, regardless of age and gender.

Even the woman in front of the two men at the moment was packed with muscle and boasted a height similar to theirs. Still, these features didn't ruin her beauty.

After a small introduction, the woman led the two to a large building in the center of the city where the Lord of the province resided.

When they arrived, they noticed that there was already a large crowd formed. These people had various different uniforms indicating the powers they came from, making it clear that help wasn't only requested from the Central continent.

However, the two of them were the only people present from the 5 major sects. The others were from various smaller powers. Even the beasts that stayed next to them indicated this fact.

From the front door of the residence, a large man walked out. He was essentially a giant, being roughly 7 feet tall with a body that would put those strongest men on earth to shame.

He wore a cloak and pants that seemed to be made from the hide of some beast, but even these couldn't hide the massive muscles beneath them.

This man was Shen Li, the patriarch of the Shen clan.

"Good evening everyone. Let me start by saying, thank you for your willingness to help our Shentian province in its time of need."

His voice was booming, not even needing mana amplification to reach the ears of everyone present. He continued with light pleasantries for a few minutes before his face became serious.

"In recent times, the Beguiled Devil Sect has become more and more brazen. Not only that, their disciples seem to be crazed.

“It isn’t a matter of sustenance nor greed that seems to drive them, but pure insanity and primal desire. Before, our Shen clan did what we could to quell them but didn’t exterminate the source, fearing the repercussions that would come with such actions, but now we can no longer hesitate.”

Before coming, Damien already knew that the reason the Beguiled Devil Sect was allowed to exist was due to the selfishness of those who ruled the region, but it seemed he had slightly misjudged.

Although conservation of forces and not wanting to lose power were indeed selfish reasons, Damien expected it to be some sort of scheme rather than a blatant action.

Shen Li’s upfront acceptance of these actions painted him in a new light not just to Damien, but to many others in the crowd as well.

Schemes and ploys were common in a world where strength is king. Greed for power and status was a natural thing. However, most would rather die than lose face by admitting to it.

Shen Li seemed the opposite. He admitted it with confidence and still stood by his decisions, showing no ulterior motives in his admittance.

The Northern Continent was the most separated from the other 4 when it came to cultures. It was the only one that had to deal with the harshness of perpetual freezing.

The number of beasts here was much lower than any other continent, and those that did live in this harsh environment were much more powerful than those who didn’t.

Due to this, food supply wasn’t something easy to have. Neither was raising an army of powerful warriors.

Most conflicts in this continent were between humans for various reasons, but at the end of the day, they amounted mainly to power struggles and overpopulation.

Shen Li's decision was selfish, true, but his selfishness didn't come from greed or personal benefit. Being a good leader in such an environment forced one to partake in such actions.

Not many had the information to come to this conclusion, so only a minor amount of respect was earned, but for Damien and Long Chen who came from such a prestigious institution, how could they not know?

Both of them have deep looks toward Shen Li, paying much closer attention as he continued his speech.

"The Beguiled Devil Sect is a mid-level power like ours, so it's sure to have at least one Law Connection realm expert at its head, maybe even more. Unfortunately, we've never seen the Sect Master in person.

"However, it matters not. My people will join this raid with all of you, so it should be more than possible to finish it off.

"Causalities are all but guaranteed in an operation like this, but as long as we move with purpose, we should be able to minimize the damages.

"And since none of us know or trust each other well enough to have synergy, let us operate on one simple rule. Don't get in each other's way.

“The raid will take place in 2 days’ time, so make any preparations you need before then. After that, we meet again at the South Gate of the city. I will see you all then.”

With his final words, Shen Li returned to his residence, leaving a crowd full of hushed whispers in his wake.

“I guess we have two days to kill. Any plans?” Damien asked as he turned to Long Chen.

“None,” he shook his head, “none of these people are worthy to form relationships with, so any talk is unneeded. I will take rest for the next two days as I wait.”

Damien nodded, but a slight grin began to form on his face. “Hmm, would you rather rest, or finish what we started during the disciple examination?”

Long Chen’s eyes flashed as he recalled that fight. It didn’t take long for his fighting spirit to start burning. “Very well. However, we are on someone else’s territory right now, so we hold back, unlike the last time.”

Damien quickly agreed. He didn’t want to pass out for another 3 days anyway. It was such a hassle to wake up after an incident like that.

He had experienced it twice already since he arrived here, and he didn’t plan to experience it again:

With them having made an agreement, they quickly left to the outskirts of the city to begin their rematch. This time, with a much lighter tone than before.

