

# Void 1421

## Chapter 1421 Ambush [2]

The collapsing of the sky happened only once in the eyes of outsiders, but it was actually a continuous phenomenon.

The Heavenly Order was strong. Every time the sky broke, it would repair it instantly.

However, Damien and the homunculus were too strong. As fast as the Heavenly Ordered repaired the sky, they destroyed it.

BOOM!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The homunculus' spear was like a shotgun. The creature stabbed over and over again, its rhythm changing from fast to slow as it changed to a power output of each strike so precisely that it was practically magic.

Meanwhile, Damien used his fists to match it.

The laws he'd mastered, laced with Void Energy, swirled around his fists like contained galaxies. Despite the fact that Damien was using physical power against a weapon made of law energy, he kept up well.

He was able to match a majority of the homunculus' strikes. While his power fell short, his speed was able to barely match it.

He used everything in his inventory to make it so.

Whether it be something like precise mana usage to stimulate his body or the most basic technique of using lightning to enhance reaction speed, Damien used it all.

Because even the smallest effect still had effect. When everything stacked together and formed one combined buff, it gave Damien what he needed to stand toe to toe with a God.

At least, a God that was restricted by its continued presence in the physical world.

BANG!

Damien blocked an attack, striking back in the same instant.

CLANG! CLANG! CLANG!

The homunculus used its spear of light to block every fuse he threw. With the sound of metal clashing against metal, massive waves of force spread for tens of millions of kilometers, making the sky rumble dangerously.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

'I can't do any damage.'

Damien and the homunculus moved so fast they were like shooting stars across the night sky. Watching from the ground, nobody could distinguish them from two light trails dancing together.

However, this was a deadly clash, more so for Damien than the homunculus.

No matter how he attacked, he couldn't find a way to break through the homunculus' defense. Even when he was able to strike its body, it felt more like he struck iron as a mortal.

A nigh-impenetrable body and spear and law skills that were beyond what a normal genius could display.

The homunculus made the reason for its existence incredibly clear.

And the thought Damien had as he tried to find a way to deal damage to it was...

'...is this what it's like to fight me?'

Disregarding his inability to deal damage, he was doing quite well.

His body wasn't as impenetrable as the creature's, but it was pretty much the same.

His skin and muscles burned several times, but they'd regenerate just as fast.

The homunculus was definitely strong enough to injure him, but it couldn't accumulate enough damage to kill him.

'It's a stalemate.'

Damien was slightly on the losing side, but for the most part, it was a stalemate.

'The thing is, I know how to kill it.'

After fighting it for so long, he'd already seen through it.

The soulless soul that powered the homunculus was the very key to defeating it.

A soul without an ego, yet without another owner. It was an unnatural phenomenon, something disallowed by the Heavenly Order.

Every soul had an identity. For a homunculus to be created was to remove that identity and replace it with something man-made.

If Damien wanted to take it apart, he just needed to target that man-made aspect and use Existence to return it to nature.

In that case, either the original ego would return, or the soul would be shattered, returned to the Wheel of Samsara.

It was a foolproof strategy, but it wasn't executable.

Why?

Because Damien didn't have enough control over Existence.

'If I want to do that, I need to be in direct contact with its soul. I can't do it as I please right now.'

How could he get to its soul when he couldn't even get through its body?

That was the dilemma Damien was currently facing.

And he didn't see any proper solutions to the problem.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The battle in the sky became hard to ignore as it zoomed through the darkness.

The fluctuations given off by the two combatants were monstrous, and the effects of their collisions eventually stopped affecting the sky alone.

The ground rumbled and shook. Buildings got scarily close to crumbling, forcing people to crouch in corners and cover their necks, hoping they survived.

Most of the Aerial army was forced to stay in the shelter of their strongholds, unable to handle the force of the mana radiating from the sky.

However, the 12 Elders and the other Demigods among them immediately set out, helping as many people cope with the catastrophe as possible.

'Damn.'

Damien clicked his tongue.

He noticed quickly when the sounds of panic reached his ears.

'I have to take the fight higher.'

He flipped backward and let his mana follow his retreat.

As the homunculus approached, he slightly lowered his body, and as it stabbed out with its spear, he sent an uppercut into its chin, blasting out all the mana contained in his arm when he made contact.

BOOOOOOOOOOOM!

"Khhh...!"

Damien gritted his teeth.

The homunculus was thrown higher into the sky as he hoped, but he wasn't completely safe either.

Its spear had punctured his shoulder as he focused on landing a hit.

When it was thrown into the air, the spear ripped through his shoulder, leaving an open gash that was spurting out blood.

Damien sent Void Energy into his shoulder as it healed, removing all the corrosive mana that was fed into him.

At the same time, he pushed upward and met the homunculus several hundred thousand kilometers higher in the sky, at a location where their fight wouldn't affect those uninvolved.

Naturally, the homunculus didn't care about where they fought. Its only order was to slaughter the man standing in the sky. It didn't have the intelligence to target the innocent to draw him in.

Therefore, as it saw him approaching, it once again prepared to strike.

Light gathered around the tip of its spear, swirling into a golden tornado.

It pushed out, concentrating its strength into the swirling mana, and thrust its spear.

VOOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

A massive beam of light slammed into Damien and went straight through him.

He was burned. Bad. The burns dug into his skin and bones, into the very cells that made up his body, and made sure not a single inch of his physical form remained unharmed.

"FUCK!"

Damien roared, but internally. His vocal cords were burned, so he couldn't actually shout it.

That hurt.

A lot.

But he wasn't knocked out of commission.

Even in this state, the Ananta Matrix existed.

And as long as the Ananta Matrix existed, he could fight.

VOOOOOOOM!

Mana gathered around his charred body.

It carried traces of the world, traces of Existence, traces of the Void.

Damien didn't know what he was about to do.

He was just gathering his mana and following his instinct to form it into an attack.

But whatever was about to happen as a result of his actions...

...was going to be apocalyptic.

Chapter 1422 Ambush [3]

Damien's instincts.

They had accompanied him since his days in the First Dungeon, constantly improving and aiding him in his path to power.

As he got stronger, he stopped relying on them. He didn't need instinctive reactions when his intentional actions were enough to solve any problem.

However, his instincts still appeared every once in a while.

And every time they appeared, they led him to something amazing.

Sometimes it was in the form of another person, sometimes it was an opportunity he never would've seen coming, and sometimes, it was a guiding hand that helped him manifest his power in the most effective way.

Damien's instincts never had time to help him in the last aspect because he wasn't fighting people who couldn't truly harm him.

The current battle was different.

Perhaps it couldn't kill him, but the homunculus was truly a God. Damien had no way of confirming that it truly didn't have any means to send him to hell.

He'd been thinking for the entire battle. He responded as best as he could, but he never directly tried to take the upper hand, because he couldn't find a way through the homunculus' defense.

Attacking without a target was simply pointless. What Damien did instead was corral the destructive entity and guide it to a place where he could fight it without worry.

After that, he only worked hard enough to keep it there.

Until his instincts appeared to show him the way.

He didn't quite understand what he was doing.



In simple terms, he gathered all his energy into his fists and got ready to release it, but that wasn't nearly enough explanation to do it justice.

The Divine Energy of the Heavenly World, the so-called "Demonic Energy" of the Foreign Races, and Damien's exclusive Void Energy.

These were the forces under his control at the moment.

Each of them functioned differently, and they were absolutely independent forces that couldn't be combined in any way.

Damien had actually tried in the past, but he'd always failed. It seemed as if any time the energies were brought together, they'd repel each other instinctively.

Void Energy was like glue. It had always functioned like that, even when he was a lower existence.

But even Void Energy couldn't glue its compatriots together.

Or, well, that was Damien's assumption after so many failed attempts.

His thoughts were being challenged now.

His burned body didn't have much capability as it focused all its attention on healing, but as Damien continued to gather mana in his hands, something changed.

Divine Energy and Demonic Energy appeared on his left and right respectively.

Despite being inherently different, they were working in the same way. They supported Damien's laws, becoming billowing heaps of mana that split the sky into two halves, one dark blue and the other crimson red.

On the Divine side, Creation, Life, Time, and other concepts related to or stemming from the aforementioned three resided. They created a calm yet ferocious energy, like a dormant volcano waiting for the moment to erupt.

On the Demonic Side was the complete opposite. Destruction, Death, Space, and all other chaotic forces gathered together as one. Unlike the calm of its other half, it was a raging tsunami that annihilated everything in the most destructive way possible.

Damien stood in the sky, the mediator between these two energies.

At this point, he wasn't able to move at all. He was stuck regulating the energy so it didn't become catastrophic for those uninvolved as well.

The homunculus wasn't going to let him go easily either.

Despite its lack of intelligence, it clearly senses the dangerous aura emanating from Damien's body.

It gathered its light spear once again and charged, letting loose a flurry of thousands of attacks.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The homunculus' spear wasn't as easy as it seemed.

To the outside viewer, it was just a product of Light Laws. Even those more informed could only sense the Death Laws lacing its every move.

But there was a problem.

This homunculus was not designed to fight "Damien Void."

It was designed to kill Gods.

This wasn't the true extent of its power.

It only used as much power as necessary based on its assessment of the enemy, but when Damien started gathering so much energy in one place, it totally reevaluated his level.

It started treating him as a genuine threat.

Nothing changed in its appearance. Just like the Divine Order always did, they made sure the homunculus would never appear as anything other than holy in the eyes of others.

However, another force entered its spear, hidden to all but other Gods.

This force wasn't something a Demigod could access. One could say it was the trademark of Gods, the staple of their realm.

It was this force that allowed them to enter the Heavenly God Plane, and it was partly because of this force that their power was so great when their restrictions were lifted.

An Edict.

Edicts were proclamations from the Heavenly Order that acknowledged a God as a True Divinity.

They were above laws and authorities, and while they were usually based on Divinities established during Cosmic Rebirth, they were esoteric and had far more power than anyone could imagine.

Every God could only have one Edict, and that Edict wouldn't change whether they liked it or not. Since Edicts came from the heavens themselves, it was impossible for an unnatural creation like a homunculus to have access to one.

At least, not normally.

But this specimen, along with those created alongside it, was made with a Godly soul to begin with.

Their Edicts didn't get retracted because their egos were gone.

Or did they...?

In any case, since the homunculi were still in development, it was unknown what would happen if they used the Edicts of their past selves, but there hadn't been a problem yet.

Especially not with the homunculus fighting against Damien.

Using an Edict in the real world had several consequences, but the homunculus didn't care.

It deemed Damien a threat worthy of such power, and it used that power without hesitation.

The homunculus shot forward. It had made distance to prepare its next attack, but that distance was closed in an instant.

Meanwhile, Damien's eyes were still closed, his attention focused on the energies under his control.

They created a natural barrier around him that blocked most of the homunculus' prior attacks, but from the aura he was sensing currently, he didn't think that would work anymore.

'I have to focus.'

He had to tame these energies and follow his instincts. He had to figure out what they were telling him to do, and what the path forward was.

Damien sunk into a deep state of comprehension where time hardly passed for him. The homunculus' movements became sluggish in his perception, and the two colorful powers in his hands were made incredibly clear.

He didn't even notice his hands coming closer together until this moment.

But as he did, he finally got a clue.

'If I do something like that...'

A grin appeared on his face.

'I see. It's a loophole.'

He finally understood what he was meant to do.

The concept of harmony, along with Void Energy and rampant Existence Laws, entered the equation once again.

This time, he was ready.

'This time, I'll break through that indestructible body!'

Chapter 1423 Ambush [4]

Duality.

Damien always practiced with duality in mind.

He never leaned too far to one side, because his path was one close to nature. Just like everything in the natural world had an equal and opposite, his laws were the same.

Duality was an extremely important concept, not just to Damien, but in general, but it wasn't a concept that could be comprehended.

It was an overarching truth on a completely different level than other concepts. Therefore, while Damien always kept it in mind, he was never able to harness the power of duality properly.

But if he could...

He knew it would create something amazing.

For this move, he separated his laws and abilities into two equal and opposite parts. When he used everything he had, from Existence to the Void, to ease the tension between both sides and bring them together...

VOOOOOOOOM!

A massive pulse of mana spread through the sky, bringing light to the dark world.

The homunculus was immediately pushed back before it could properly approach Damien with its Edict.

His eyes opened, and their color changed to match the powers in his hands.

Damien stood straight like a pencil. His palms turned in, and as if he was entering a praying position, he brought them together.

WHOOOOOOSH!

It was hard to describe the scene. Damien had trouble pushing his hands together, but every time they inched closer, the air would fluctuate, the sky would tremble, and the atmosphere itself would quiver as if anticipating the force that was to be released.

Even the homunculus started to get desperate.

Its limited intelligence only gave it ways to attack Damien.

But no matter how it tried to attack, it was pushed away by the sheer density of the air around its target.

It couldn't approach.

Its Edict was powerful enough to bend the laws of reality, but it couldn't be used carelessly in the real world.

Therefore, such a power was to be saved until the proper moment.

The homunculus' thought process was not much of a process at all, but its intelligence did open up somewhat when it was put in an impossible situation.

Its goal was unattainable if things continued this way.

How was it to accomplish its goal?

As it searched its mind, it realized that it had to force Damien out of his current state. Otherwise, it would be struck by that dangerous force and decommissioned.

But how could it bring Damien out of that state if it couldn't touch him?

Its first instinct was to attack the space around him.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Its spear struck out countless times, followed by tens of thousands of light beams that streaked through the sky.

The air pressure was blown to pieces by the opposing force, but it returned to its previous density just moments later.

The homunculus could definitely intrude into Damien's space with this method, but it was too inefficient.

Then...

The homunculus didn't understand human emotion.

But it understood patterns.

When it observed the surroundings and noticed how the humans from Void Palace were acting, when it finally noticed the happenings on the ground...

Its thoughts became clear.

If humans stood together, then all it needed to do was give the target a reason to leave his state sooner.

And to do that...

VOOOOOOOOOM!

Damien's awareness picked it up instantly, but he couldn't move to stop it.



The homunculus charged towards the ground. Its body slammed into the earth with such force that the wind tore down nearby structures.

Innocent civilians were torn to shreds, the remnants of their bodies becoming dye that colored the swirling tornado around the creature.

It stood up, its wings flapping lightly.

It turned its head, looking out into the crowd around it.

Whether it was the Void Palace Elders or a random farmer who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

'We're doomed.'

They were not monsters.

They could not stand up against a God.

They'd seen the insane picture of Damien and the homunculus' battle, so they were more than aware of what was about to happen to them.

A spear of light appeared once more in the homunculus' hands.

Its tip widened and expanded until it was practically a lance, the severity of its laws following the same process.

VOOOOOOOOOOOM!

Just the sight of the weapon being unveiled was enough to kill.

Hundreds of people in the surroundings found their eyes melting, their bodies doing the same moments later.

"Defend!"

Perseus snapped out of his daze. He was as clear as anyone else on their weakness, but he couldn't stand by in this moment.

Using all his power, he pushed in front of the civilians and citizens of Aeria, roughly pouring mana out to create a shield that defended them.

The other elders immediately followed him without a second thought.

They were proud members of Void Palace.

They would not act shamefully even if these were their final moments.

There was no way for them to know it as they acted, but if they hadn't put up the shield exactly at that moment...

BANG!

In a single instant, the homunculus' spear became a star of its own.

Its light and heat reached an immeasurable level, burning the surrounding ground into ash. The mana holding together the shields around it was burned, to the point where the 12 Elders almost fell instantly.

However, one by one, the remaining Divinities in the crowd emerged to aid them, shouldering a portion of the burden.

The force they were facing was blocked off from the people behind them, but they were forced to deal with the damage personally.

Their skin and flesh burnt, bringing them endless pain, but they didn't regret it.

Their actions were not in vain.

Because if they didn't stand before that light, if it was allowed to reach the general populace who hadn't reached Divinity...

It would have killed several tens of millions of people in that single instant.

What would've happened from that point forth didn't need to be mentioned.

They were content. Now, instead of ending in a massacre, only they would lose their lives.

It was enough.

They made peace with death, but they forgot one thing.

They weren't the only ones fighting.

Holding back the light for that instant was all they needed to do.

Just as they felt their power waning in the face of their opposition...

RUMBLE!

A furious quake spread through the sky.

It had changed color yet again.

It wasn't black. It wasn't red or blue either.

It was a perfect variation of silver-white that it had never been before.

"Huu..."

Damien took a deep breath as he stared at the energy in his palms.

There was only one remaining after all the others had been combined.

It wasn't a completely accurate depiction, but it was close enough.

By utilizing Duality and everything at his disposal...

Damien had created a loophole to access Existence.

'This is what I'm working towards.'

It was his first time seeing it in its full glory.

His body was constantly crumbling under its weight. If it wasn't for the Authority of Immortality, he would've died the instant it was created.

It was amazing that something existed that could kill him so easily, but if there was anything with that kind of power, it was—

'-Existence.'

And with its majesty...

'...I can kill that God.'

Chapter 1424 Mana [1]

Time stopped.

The moment the silver light appeared in Damien's hands, time became inconsequential.

Damien was truly holding Existence.

Everything else became negligible under its luster.

Damien almost lost himself in it.

His body was already turning into ash and rebuilding itself every instant. If his mind collapsed as well, he'd kill himself before he even got the chance to use it.

But it was truly wondrous.

It made Damien forget his situation, forget his surroundings, and forget himself.

It was all those things.

It was everything.

To hold a mana that truly represented all things in his hand gave him a feeling that was impossible to understand or describe.

All he could think was, "This is my goal."

He repeated it over and over again.

Because this mana felt Absolute.

'Focus. Focus. Focus.'

He finally got a grip on his mind after several seconds of blankly staring at the light. As he focused, he was finally able to see the outside world again.

The blinding light let out by the homunculus became monochrome. The fearful expressions of the common people, the agonizing expressions of the Divinities, and the overall air of struggle were frozen in time, a perfect picture for Damien to view.

'What am I supposed to do with this?'

This was existence.

As he held it in his hands, he was given the freedom to do quite literally anything he wished.

'But the more complex my desire, the more severe the consequences.'

It wasn't something he could use as he pleased.

Still, he felt that simply killing the homunculus here was a waste of this power.

'What if I try to revive it?'

What would happen if he brought its ego back and subordinated the homunculus?

'It would definitely be useful, but is it worth more than devouring it?'

If he devoured it, he'd pretty much learn everything about the Divine Order that could be used to plot against them. It was far more efficient than information from someone else's mouth could ever be.

Yet, he didn't want to leave things as they were.

'There must be something...'

The area he could affect was only as large as his perceptive range. He couldn't do anything crazier than he already had.

But maybe he could—

'I got it.'

He suddenly had a genius idea.

Flash!

Damien disappeared from the sky and appeared directly next to the homunculus.

It was frozen in time. It couldn't realize his presence at all, nor could its mana affect him.

Damien was different. If he wanted to touch the frozen homunculus without awakening it, he absolutely could.

He put his hand on its forehead.

When he finally felt its skin like this, he realized how fake it felt. While it was a real living being, it felt more synthetic than anything else.

'Give it to me.'

He didn't know exactly what it was, but he wanted it.

'Give me your ability to enter the Heavenly God Plane.'

Damien was still at the lowest level of Divinity.

As he'd discovered in the Forbidden Secret Realm, ascending to Godhood wasn't something he could do any time soon.

At least, he wouldn't be able to do so until he gathered all six concepts of Existence.

Since the first was in a secret realm that opened every few millennia, the others wouldn't be easy to find either.

He refused to stay in his current predicament for that long.

The Heavenly God Plane was the battleground of Gods. It wasn't a place he logically should've been entering yet, since he didn't have the capabilities to fight Gods at all.

However, he had several ideas about the place, and more importantly, he wanted to know exactly what it was.



'If I can just enter the Heavenly God Plane, I'll be able to bring myself to a new level regardless of the pieces of existence. There's something there. I don't know what exactly it is, but there's something there that I need to find.'

He originally sensed it when he sensed the plane's existence. It held secrets beyond anything Damien had seen before.

If he wanted to unravel them and grow, he first needed to steal "something" from the homunculus.

As for what that was?

It was a power he wouldn't have received even if he decided to devour it.

Its Edict, its proof of Godhood.

VOOOOOOOOOOOM!

The silver light in Damien's hand brightened.

As his wish was confirmed, it immediately went to work.

It spread until it covered the homunculus, covered the Demigods beyond the mana barrier, and covered everything else in the Aeria Principality.

First and foremost, it intruded into the homunculus' soul. It stole the artificial being's Divinity and extracted its Edict.

But that wasn't all it did.

It healed the Demigods who stood up for the common people, it repaired all the damaged structures in the entire principality, it erased the bodies of the Divine Order soldiers who'd died previously, and even gathered the souls of the deceased innocents so they could be sent off properly.

Everything Damien wanted to happen happened.

Most of it was still secondary, because it took most of the Existence Mana Damien gathered to extract the Edict.

And more importantly, to place the Edict in his own soul without killing him.

A Demigod's soul wasn't strong enough to hold something so powerful. Hypothetically speaking, a procedure like this one would demolish a Demigod's soul, shattering it instantly.

However, Damien's soul was special. It took on the properties of the Void, which meant it could contain anything.

When the Edict entered his soul, he got a strange feeling like a stranger was sleeping in his bed. It was unnatural, and while he could feel the Edict's weight, it didn't feel real to him.

When his soul acclimated to its presence and started turning it into Damien's power, he started to understand it more, but it still felt half-baked.

'Edicts...'

He didn't know much about them, honestly, but he got the gist of it.

This homunculus' Edict was called [Darkest Light].

It was an ability disguised as light, but was truly an absolute darkness that consumed everything.

Honestly, it was relatively useful for Damien, considering the nature of his abilities, but he didn't quite understand why Edicts were so valuable.

'I guess I'll find out when I devour it.'

He glanced at the homunculus.

He thought the process of acquiring an Edict would be something grand. He thought the same about his first time killing a God.

But in this moment, it felt minuscule.

In front of the true weight of Existence, these events were nothing.

He was still in the frozen world. The effects of his skill didn't end yet, and likely wouldn't end until he devoured the homunculus, the last action in the command he gave.

'Maybe, the second this ends...'

Damien sighed.

'It's not like I have the option to prolong it either.'

He knew in his heart. This wasn't something he'd be able to replicate easily.

This might've been his last time using this ability until he truly unlocked it.

It wasn't odd for him to wish he could stay in this space for a long time and simply understand it, but with the amount of Existence Mana Damien was able to produce, he only had a few more seconds at the maximum.

'Huu...then, let's get it over with.'

Damien held his hand out again, and as he gave the command, a pitch-black mana flooded out of his body and cocooned the homunculus.

That was it.

Time resumed, all changes included in the true timeline.

And Damien...

Chapter 1425 Mana [2]

Damien's calmness left him the instant he returned to the real world.

Even he didn't realize it was a product of the Existence Mana.

His brain didn't have nearly enough power to behold the Existence Mana, let alone the ability to function while enduring it.

Information rushed into his head in droves beyond droves.

Everything that happened finally became real to him.

The processes that had to take place for his desire to be carried out were burned into his mind, almost shattering it with ease.

And his mind wasn't the only thing affected.

His body practically turned into ash once and for all.

In the eyes of everyone else when time resumed, Damien didn't exist at all.

It was as if everything returned to normal. The only clue to the fact that the events they experienced were real was their position and memory.

Damien was completely gone, but, in fact, he was right in the middle of them all.

His body couldn't bear the force of Existence in the slightest. It was already gone, down to the last drop of blood.

However, Damien wasn't dead yet.

His Authority of Immortality allowed him to live under the complete destruction of his physical vessel. It could even rebuild that vessel, given some time.

He was currently existing in soul form, in a plane nobody could sense, enduring pain beyond belief.

Since his body couldn't take the agony, his soul had to bear it all.

Damien gritted his metaphysical teeth and endured it.

It felt like he was being stabbed by ten thousand swords, burned by the brightest flame, frozen to death, poisoned, drowned, and slammed against the ground at 100 miles per hour, all at the same time.

Unbearable wasn't even enough of a word.

Existence was far beyond his capabilities. The loophole he'd created allowed him to use a mockery of its mana, but he wasn't free from the consequences of acting outside his bounds.

There was nothing he could do. His soul wasn't capable of screaming or writhing to ease the pain, so he could only sit there and agonize silently.

The days went by. The people left the battlefield to rebuild their homes, but when they returned, they realized that everything was in peak condition.

Nobody saw their savior. They didn't know what happened, but they remembered the star in the sky that was fighting the homunculus.

So, under the leadership of the 12 Elders and the leaders of Aeria who protected the citizens from the light, they gathered what they could find of the dead and held funerals.

Their next move was more militant.

Regardless of the unexplainable events that took place, freeing them from the curse of the Divine Order's presence, they were still at war.

Since they had been graced with time, they entered a period of fortifying.

To make sure the Aeria Principality wouldn't fall again, they reinforced their defenses and truly created an army that would become famous throughout the lands for its accomplishments.

But that was a story for another time.

Damien's torture lasted for three days before his body finally built itself back up.

'Pain is power is really a life-saving mentality.'

He sighed to himself, happy to finally have a mouth back, and flew into the sky, concealing his presence.

'I did something crazy without realizing it.'

His actions weren't ideal in the slightest. If the Divine Order had even a little bit of intelligence, they'd definitely be on guard after something like this.

Not only did one of their homunculi die, but it died in a strange way in a place where it never should've died.

'I've put myself on a timer.'

If the Divine Order started seriously considering Void Palace as an enemy, they'd have no choice but to cut their plans short and fight a war.

'I have to find the 2 Swords who disappeared in the next 15 days.'

Damien had to teleport to Aeria without the help of teleportation arrays. He did so mostly because he wanted to give the people in the main palace more time to grow, but it was also because he had to hide his identity.

He couldn't be someone who had enough wealth to travel all the way to Aeria from the vicinity of the main palace in one go.

Nevertheless, because of that, it had been 10 days since he left, which meant a total of 20 years had passed in the barrier.

It wasn't much time at all.

'I want to buy them at least a few more decades. Even if I've given them a method to speedrun Divinity, they still need around 50 years.'

He was already doubting if they could truly do it, but if they didn't even have enough time to try, what was the point?

'Let's finish up quick and go back. I don't have time to sit around.'

Damien glanced down at the Aeria Principality.

His mana leaked out, creating twelve envelopes, which each drifted to a Void Palace Elder.

It was an immediate summons to the main palace. They also mentioned that Aeria's development would be properly managed by the palace so they could leave without worries.

Since the problems were over, Damien left immediately.

His next destination was deeper into Divine Order territory.

'It was a pain in the ass to digest through the pain, but I managed to learn a lot from the homunculus' soul.'

From the deepest schemes of the order to the most general information he needed to know, it was all present.

Nobody held their tongues around lifeless dolls, so the amount of information the homunculus had stored in its existence was actually mind-boggling.

Not only did Damien get a clue as to where he needed to go to find the missing Swords, but...

'...with this, I think I can find a way to save other homunculi when I meet them.'

The prospects were limitless.

'But I'll have to save most of those ideas for later. Right now, I need to find them.'



The two Swords who disappeared weren't just common characters.

No, they were the leader of Void Palace's information division and one of their strongest swordsmen.

Their power was absolutely necessary.

'But...'

Damien frowned.

'...I'll hope for the best.'

There was something specific he learned from the homunculus' memories.

One specific fact that Damien didn't want to acknowledge but was forced to stomach.

If it was really as they said...

"Haa..."

He didn't even want to think about it.

He had to go regardless, and he had to find out for himself.

As Damien set out for the Southwestern Region, he left behind many things in the south.

Most of those things were already known, but he didn't realize what he'd created in Aeria.

He didn't understand what kind of scene he caused.

The Aerial people didn't just build fortification structures and weapons during this time of preparation.

They built a massive statue, visible from several dozens of kilometers away even by mortals.

It was a picture of the homunculus that terrified and almost slaughtered them, with its heart being carved out by a man covered in stars.

This was the beginning of Damien's second legend in the Heavenly World.

The Legend of the God of War.

Chapter 1426 6th Sword [1]

Damien had quite a ways to travel, but it didn't take nearly as long this time.

Since he wasn't near the main palace, his identity wouldn't be questioned nearly as much, so putting on his Damien Grey disguise was more than enough to use teleportation arrays.

The Southwestern Region's culture was wildly different from the Southern Region.

The architecture was more of a textbook Western style, and it was far more technological than one would expect from a religiously dominated society.

The people of the Southwestern Region had unwavering faith in their god. It was to the point where a majority of the population would likely be willing to sacrifice their lives in its name.

The brainwashing had several negative effects on the people, but on society in general, it also had its positives.

For instance, the technological development.

With their united minds going towards a single cause without such thing as an opposing opinion, they were able to make rapid progress in several industries, namely daily conveniences.

The cities of this region were extremely modern, reminiscent of Earth's cities filled with skyscrapers and apartments that cramped millions of people into a small space with ease.

There was a police force as well.

The Divine Order was sneaky. They committed several atrocities, but many of them were done in the shadows.

The people didn't know they were being brainwashed. Such procedures would be done from birth, so it was impossible for them to even have the thought.

Their lives were relatively normal as well. Besides the overwhelming amount of religious influence in their daily schedules, they lived like normal people.

It could be said that their lives had been purposefully designed to not draw suspicion from the outside.

But there was an air of uncanniness.

As Damien traveled through the territory and ambled its cities, he could feel the difference between them and normal people.

Though, he couldn't quite put his finger on what exactly was different.

The disguise was immaculate. When the average person spent time in the Southwestern Region, they wouldn't even realize the difference.

And while the territory rarely had immigrants due to its heavy culture that most outsiders weren't willing to accept, there were occasionally those who decided to make the change and ended up indoctrinating themselves, becoming part of the crowd.

It was an insanely intricate scheme. Damien couldn't even imagine the amount of time it took for it to become so complete and cyclical, to the point where it could likely never be broken.

'Still, I'll have to break it.'

Damien didn't care what they chose to believe in, but the people who instilled those beliefs were not in their right minds.

If, after the Divine Order was destroyed, the church they established could be continued under better leadership, Damien would absolutely choose that option over others.

'But we don't even know if that's possible yet.'

Whether or not the people would be willing to make such a change...

'I guess I'll find out soon enough.'

Damien was already outside the big cities. He was currently in a small rural village somewhere in the midwest of the region, standing outside a rundown cathedral that looked more than just out of place in its surroundings.

'This is the place.'

He'd seen the location in the homunculus' memories.

It was one of many that had been in and out of this cathedral.

After all, it was made here.

'This cathedral is said to be an ancient relic of a civilization before the Divine Order, one of many things that prove the existence of their god, however...'

In reality, it was a front the Divine Order used to hide one of its many homunculus creation facilities.

And Damien was about to enter it.

He walked up the main stairs like someone who had no idea what he was doing, and as he expected, he was intercepted by a clergyman.

"Is there anything I can help you with?" He asked, a welcoming smile on his face.

His eyes were squinted, so it wasn't easy to see his expression, but it was obvious he was eyeing Damien up and down, determining his purpose.

"Ah, no, I'm in the Southwestern Region for a bit on work, so I thought it would be nice to sightsee."

"I see..."

It wasn't rear. Damien's excuse, no matter how plain it sounded, was valid. People did indeed have to travel between cardinal regions for work fairly often.

After all, each region had its own speciality, and several million people had been employed to help transport said specialties to everywhere they were desired.

Damien had worked undercover for several years in the Eastern Region. For the sake of his convenience and hers, Yulia provided him a valid identity as a mercenary working for one of said companies, an identity that would be valid forever, or until the day they became enemies, as Yulia put it.

He could easily show his ID card whenever it was needed, but it seemed the clergyman didn't doubt his identity.

"Allow me to show you the way. Our cathedral has quite a long history, so you may get bored along the way."

"Don't worry. I happen to have a great interest in different cultures, so this is great for me."

Damien responded with the same cordial attitude, and without another word, the clergyman gave him a tour around the church.

Various facts were mentioned, including the history Damien already knew.

He was given the whole tourist experience, and he played his part well in return.

However, his goal was naturally different.

'I can't enter in broad daylight this time.'

He had to find his way down there and see if what he was looking for was truly there, and he needed to do it secretly.

He'd heard the rumors as he traveled the lands.

People were predicting the war already.

If the common people could sense it coming, the higher-ups could too.

But war between two great clans wasn't something that could be initiated so easily.

After all, they were too strong. If a war started, it would inevitably cause countless problems.

Justification was necessary.

Currently, Void Palace had it but was holding their hand.

The Divine Order didn't have it yet.

Not in the slightest.

But if Damien left any evidence of his actions here?

If they were given the initiative?

It wasn't something he could allow.

The entire time Damien took his tour of the cathedral, he was scanning the place with his awareness. For extra safety, he even detached his awareness from his body and disguised its energy so it couldn't be traced back to him.

He didn't find anything but rock for several thousands of kilometers under the cathedral, but eventually, the location revealed itself to him.

'I don't see any specific way to get down there, but that's better for me. I should be able to make it through teleportation.'

It was unfortunate that he couldn't see what was going on in the facility, only able to see where its roof was, but that was enough for now.

Regardless of what he found down there, it would be a useful clue.

'Since there's nothing else to do here, there's no need to continue looking suspicious.'

The tour was about to end, and he'd run out of time.

"Thank you for the experience. It really was as interesting as I expected."

The clergyman smiled and nodded, returning his empty words.

Damien left without any problems, and for the rest of the day, he continued his tourist front without deviating even slightly.

He could feel the eyes on him. They didn't leave until night came and he found a place to sleep.

However, as Damien found, they hadn't left at all. They'd waited, and when the next day dawned, they were once again on his tail.

For the next three days, Damien was forced to maintain his facade.

He checked in with some of Yulia's people whom she had stationed in the nearest big city, affirming his identity once again, and when that was finally done, the shadows that followed him slowly drifted away.

On the fifth day, he finally got his chance.

And he capitalized on it.

He arrived back at the cathedral in the dead of night, concealed by everything he could use.

The infiltration would begin and end today.



There was no room for mistakes.

Chapter 1427 6th Sword [2]

The cathedral was as crowded during the day as during the night.

It was odd only because Damien knew what this place really was. To others, nuns and clergymen residing in the cathedrals they spent their daily lives worshipping in.

They were obviously all trained.

Their auras were hidden behind several layers of magic, but Damien saw through them all. Not a single person working in the cathedral right now was below the level of Divinity.

Luckily, Damien didn't need to deal with them.

He could directly teleport into the facility from the sky where he was.

It was far more difficult of a task than passing through the air, but his capabilities had increased since he first landed in the Heavenly World.

His teleportation wasn't nearly as restricted, so in that one move, he was able to reach his desired destination.

Blue light streamed up from the floor below and illuminated most of the facility.

The ceiling was much higher than one would expect it to be with the amount of provided light, but about half the area was covered in darkness, and that was where Damien was.

'Okay, then—'

Damien immediately halted his thoughts.

'They're confident, aren't they?'

It took him a second to realize their presence.

All around him, hanging from the ceiling suspended by chains several feet thick, were almost a hundred tubes large enough to carry a human, filled with an aquamarine liquid that moved around inside like it was alive.

'Those are...'

The ones hanging were just liquid, but the same structures existed on the ground as well.

And those were not filled with liquid only.

Inside each of them was a homunculus, cocooned in its own wings.

'Hmm...I'm definitely curious about the production method, but I can't kill someone here yet.'

Damien closed his eyes and created thousands of strands of awareness, using the same process to disguise them.

They spread out, moving all throughout the facility as Damien could see it and finding any hidden entrances to other rooms.

'Wow. I knew it had to be big to be a research facility, but still...'

The part Damien sensed from the surface was only the beginning.

Through winding tunnels of pristine white were several dozens of rooms of similar sizes. Some of them were eerily empty, while others were filled with people in suits that encased their whole bodies, working on unknown projects.

They were obviously important areas, but what interested Damien more were the dozens of locked compartments that lined each one.

His awareness couldn't penetrate them at all, which could only mean they held something nobody was meant to see.

'I don't see any important personnel here...'

The people here were even weaker than the guards in the cathedral.

Let alone a God, there wasn't even a single Divinity in this place:

'Maybe they're also brainwashed bystanders.'

Damien focused his awareness on a single individual, using it to enter their mind.

'Grey.'

It was a sea without color.

As expected, those working in these facilities were just arms and legs being controlled by another.

'It makes sense from their perspective. They've already been cautious to the maximum, but in the situation where they're found regardless, none of their people will be implicated.'

Gaining information or even trying to understand what was being done at these facilities was almost impossible unless one had a power like Damien's.

'It still concerns me that there's nobody here, but I'll have to act first and think later.'

He wasn't here for homunculi.

But he was here for someone who might've already become one.

'Rein Winchester.'

Void Palace's 6th Sword.

He was one of their youngest, yet, he was also one of the strongest.

From the conversations had by those officials in the homunculus' memories, Rein had been transported to this facility roughly 10 years ago. Not a single word from him had been heard since then.

Damien didn't have much hope for the man, but he had to check the information despite that.

Because on the off chance that Rein was alive, Damien abandoning him would've been the worst possible choice.

'I'm not exactly sure about how they make homunculi, but they'll likely use soul torture to get all the information about Void Palace that they'd possibly need out of his mouth before they convert him.'

That would be the worst-case scenario.

On this expedition, Damien would either save a Sword or learn that the enemy knew all of his weaknesses.

The stakes were quite high.

'I should start searching.'

Damien's eyes narrowed.

He didn't know a good way to enter the sealed compartments through normal means, but he already had a solution.

He could use the same method he used in the Ancient Battlefield.

By phasing into the surrounding earth and keeping himself in an immaterial state, he could travel without boundaries.

The Ancient Battlefield was a piece of the Heavenly World that broke off. If he could do it there, he had more than enough power to do it here.

With his newfound mana capacity, it wasn't as much of a trying task as he thought it would be: he was able to enter the earth, move through it, and find a way to phase back into the sealed compartments without much difficulty.

But he didn't find anything worth his attention.

They were mainly filled with corpses. There was no racial specificity to them, nor was there anything to indicate a pattern.

They were corpses of anything and everything that could be killed, of any gender, of any age.

The compartments were filled to the brim with them. It wasn't like the Divine Order had no way to get rid of these corpses, which could only mean...

'...there's something more being done than just the creation of homunculi. There's a greater goal at play.'

Damien so desperately wanted to find out what was going on, but, again, he wasn't able to.

'It fucking sucks, but there's nothing I can do. When I have the fate of my entire homeland on my shoulders, I have to be more cautious than ever.'

He had to suppress his personality for now.

He was not Damien Void, the wanderer.

He was Damien Void, the Young Lord of Void Palace.

That was the man who, after searching through 23 sealed compartments, finally entered one that was free of corpses.

It was a compartment in complete darkness like the rest, the smell just as musty and rancid as a room filled with dead bodies.

But there was only one body present here.

A barely living one, skin and bones that clearly had not been given any sort of humane treatment in ages.

That body was shackled to the wall by its wrists and ankles, and while it was easy to mistake it for a corpse...

'...he's still breathing.'

An aura of life.

Along with another aura that barely existed anymore.

The air of Divinity that came from this man's barely surviving soul.

It was Divinity with a trace of something Damien not only recognized, but became very familiar with over the past 10 years.

This was the man Damien had been looking for.

This was Rein Winchester.

Or at least, what was left of him.

Chapter 1428 7th Sword [1]

"Hmm..."

Damien didn't know what he expected, but it wasn't this.

'Why would they keep him alive like this?'

He couldn't think of a reason why this man wasn't dead already.

From his state, it was obvious that his soul had been tortured to a near-death state. With that, Damien didn't need any more answers.

'I don't know how much they know, but if it came from a Sword, it has to be significant.'

Damien frowned. His mind went through dozens of thousands of possibilities as he tweaked his plans for Void Palace.

'It won't be nearly the same as it used to be. It might cause trouble if I try to do something so radical, but it's the best option for us.'

"Granted, that's only if we have time."

Damien shook his head.

He was instantly disappointed by what he found here, but he was going to salvage his experience as much as possible.

He walked forward and put his palm on the top of the corpse-like man's head.

Despite the direct contact, Rein showed no signs of awareness.

His ego was probably already gone. What was left here was a soulless soul just like a homunculus had, but this one had yet to be instilled with a purpose.

'The only positive about being in this state is that I can do to them as they did to us.'

Rein's soul didn't have an ounce of strength to resist Damien's intrusion. He didn't have to kill Rein to read the memories of his existence.

Damien closed his eyes, setting up precautions so he'd be notified if anything special happened on the outside, and sent his senses into Rein's soul.

He read every memory from the start. He saw how Rein grew, how he served and worshipped Void Palace, and how he ended up captured.

"Haa..."



He felt Rein's pain with his own soul as he experienced the memories firsthand, but Damien didn't crack. Unlike the average person, he'd endured soul torture several times since he was young. He wouldn't break from this much.

'Regardless of what happened, he deserves to be respected.'

Damien couldn't feel anything but sympathy for Rein after seeing what he'd been through, as well as his fierce loyalty towards the palace.

This was a man worthy of the title "6th Sword" in his youth. For him to die like this...

'...it's a bit of a shame.'

Putting aside his posthumous contribution, which gave Damien a clear idea of how the Divine Order was operating, Rein's hundreds of contributions to the palace without any sort of compensation or rewards were more than enough for Damien to take note of him.

Someone like this was absolutely necessary to a big influence.

'But even I can't heal a body like this. His soul, though...'

Damien had a sudden idea.

'His soul can be fixed.'

There were hundreds of perfect vessels outside, and Damien happened to have the knowledge of how to transfer a soul to another body.

'Perfect. I'd been wanting to find out about the homunculus production, so this ties together well.'

Glancing at Rein, Damien sliced his finger through the air, producing a small tear in space that shattered the imprisoned Sword's shackles.

'I don't want to take his soul out prematurely in its current state, so I'll just take him with me for now.'

Damien grabbed Rein and sent his mana into the air to transfer him to the Sanctuary.

However, at that moment, the entire facility shook.

RUMBLE!

Damien's senses went on alert. He quickly retracted his mana and kept his mind focused on the strands of awareness he had spread throughout the area.

His eyes opened to a new scene, completely different from the pristine research environment he'd seen previously.

"Fiends! Die by my hand!"

A booming voice struck the walls and caused them to shake.

In the middle of the room Damien entered through, the one directly under the cathedral, there was now another man.

Unlike Damien, he was taking a more direct approach. The ceiling was caved in as if he'd destroyed the ground down to the hidden facility. There were no signs of a cathedral on the surface at all.

The pods filled with homunculi were destroyed, from the most developed ones to the ones that were still fluids, and the entire room was now a mess of dust and debris.

The cause of the damage was just one man.

He had short, spiky blonde hair and bright red eyes. He held a massive greatsword in his hands, which he swung endlessly, destroying everything in his path.

He rapidly made his way through several facilities, utterly decimating them, until he finally reached the one Damien was in.

'All the researchers are being killed, and all the research is being destroyed. This guy is...'

BOOOOOOOM!

An explosion rocked the sealed compartment.

'He'll be here soon.'

Damien's eyes narrowed.

The room had already been cleared.

Each sealed compartment was being torn open and destroyed.

The man got endlessly closer to Damien, but Damien didn't move.

He could've escaped to the Sanctuary, but he chose not to.

It was a terrible decision.

The man outside was not someone he could handle.

He needed to use Existence Mana at a heavy price in order to kill a homunculus that emulated their power.

So how could he ever think about matching up against a real God?

Still, he didn't move.

Instead, he took Rein's body onto his back and carried it.

He kneeled down on the ground, and by the time his sealed compartment burst open...

BANG!

Damien slammed against the wall, using his side so the man on his back didn't take the brunt of the force.

He coughed a mouthful of blood, quickly standing up and wiping it off.

His eyes came in contact with another pair, one that looked at him with curiosity and a hidden darkness.

"You...are not one of them."

The man spoke strangely, and his eyes slowly warmed.

"I see...I see...!"

His expression completely changed, and even tears began to subtly form in the corners of his eyes.

"There were still people on our side...!"

He was practically mumbling to himself with no particular target in mind.

However, he quickly straightened himself and calmed his expression.

"I don't know who you are or who you work for, but now isn't the time for us to talk. They'll be here soon."

Damien glared at the man distrustfully.

"Who are you?"

"Hmm...we don't have much time, but I'll give you a short introduction."

The man walked forward, putting his hand on Damien's shoulder.

Naturally, Damien couldn't resist.

"I am Void Palace's 7th Sword, and the man in your arms is my colleague."

BOOOOOOOM!

A sound came from the entrance of the hole the so-called 7th Sword had created.

"Shit, they're already here."

He clicked his tongue and glanced down at Damien.

"Just come with me for now. We can talk in detail later."

Damien nodded shakily without much of a choice, and without another word, the man took out his sword and slashed upward.

A massive amount of mana was unleashed from his body, and with that single slash, the earth was evaporated into nothingness in all directions, creating another huge hole that led to the surface.

With Damien still grabbed by the shoulder, he shot into the air, flying dozens of millions of kilometers per second.

Throughout this whole interaction, including the quick escape, Damien remained relatively silent, secretly protecting Rein's body with his mana.

His eyes did not soften because he was with the "7th Sword," nor did he feel some sort of relief.

No, rather, it was the other way around.

Currently, Damien was having a very, very, very, very, very hard time keeping his bloodlust hidden.

Chapter 1429 7th Sword [2]

Void Palace's 7th Sword, Giovanni Perera.

Maybe nobody else would know, but Damien was well aware of where Giovanni was supposed to be right now.

His mission was nowhere near this region. He was supposed to be at least 100 trillion kilometers away.

For him to reach here wasn't impossible, but how did he know Rein would be here?

No, before that, how did he even know Rein had been taken?

He surely hadn't been in contact with the main palace.

Then, wasn't there only one source remaining for him to learn it from?

There wasn't much suspense to it. Damien knew Giovanni had switched sides from the moment he first devoured the homunculus.

Giovanni was heavily involved in the process of their creation. He wasn't just someone who'd converted sides recently. He'd clearly been in bed with the Divine Order for a very long time.

As for the current situation?

Damien had been discovered. It was that simple.

They definitely didn't know Damien's identity yet, but the fact that an intruder would be aiming for the cathedral facility probably spread to the higher-ups.

They definitely didn't know Damien's identity yet, but the fact that an intruder would be aiming for the cathedral facility probably spread to the higher-ups.

After that, Giovanni was dispatched to deal with it.

His identity was quite special, after all.

If he destroyed the homunculus facility and killed everyone involved, the Divine Order wouldn't have to take responsibility for what was taking place there and his actions could be disguised as heroism.

And, if his identity as a Sword of Void Palace was used as leverage, the destruction of the cathedral and murder of its personnel could be used as reasoning for the Divine Order to take extreme measures.

All they had to do was dip their toes into the mess a little and control the spread of information, and everything Giovanni did would become their benefit, not a loss.

'They must think we won't be able to respond.'

Wherever Damien and Rein were being taken right now would likely be an execution ground made for them.

As they were the last evidence of the truth, they'd be put down.

However, Damien had other plans for this traitor.

'Just wait until we reach that grave you've prepared.'

He'd made a plan to deal with Giovanni from the moment he left the Aeria Principality.

All he needed was a moment of opportunity.

Since Giovanni was providing it so kindly himself instead of forcing Damien to look for it...

'...I'll use your stage to show you what betrayal feels like.'

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Giovanni flew at the speed of a God, covering vast distances in a single leap.

He protected Damien from the winds he caused by using his mana, but he left a little gap open for Rein's body to be damaged, as if he wanted to create an excuse to kill him.



Damien patched that hole, of course, but he also created a wound on Rein's body so Giovanni wouldn't notice.

The only difference was that the wound Damien made wasn't fatal. He would make sure this body didn't die until he found a new container for its soul.

Tens of billions of kilometers passed by like a breeze. It was hard to feel the distance, but by the time they landed in a coliseum-like structure that existed dead in the middle of nowhere, they'd crossed nearly half of the Southwestern Region.

Thud!

Giovanni tossed Damien roughly, making him fall to the ground.

"We're here."

His words were short, unlike his previous demeanor, but he didn't seem ready to drop his disguise quite yet.

"What's the situation of the main palace? Is everything okay?"

He sounded concerned, and he was. After all, somebody had come to save Rein, and it wasn't someone he recognized.

Of course, that person only had the strength of a Demigod, but the fact that the main palace was sending out people for matters like these was still alarming.

Nobody ever underestimated Void Palace's strength, especially not Giovanni, who was a part of it for most of his life.

Any odd move they made would be observed by the entire world.

Then, one could ask, if he was aware of the palace's hidden strength, then why did he choose to betray it?

The answer was simple, but complicated to explain.

In as few words as possible, he had an obsessive personality.

He wasn't some kind of lecher, nor was he completely evil, but he was obsessed with artificial life.

And more than that, he was obsessed with blood.

Void Palace wasn't an influence that had trouble often. Even if he only wanted to kill other practitioners rather than innocent civilians, even if he was okay with saving his sword for those who were evil, he wanted to kill.

The Divine Order was simply more equipped to hold him.

They could give him the blood he desired from their countless enemies and the wars they waged.

And they could satisfy his craving for artificial life, his craving for a true immortal body.

He didn't have bad feelings for Void Palace. He quite liked the place, actually.

'But what does that matter?'

Giovani glanced down at the people he'd brought with him.

One was once his colleague, and the other was a weakling.

'They expect me to stay with them?'

Giovani saw how Rein acted when he was captured. He was part of the capturing team.

Rein was someone with an undying loyalty to the palace. No matter what was done with him, he never let loose an ounce of rebellion against them.

Even when they tortured his soul, they barely got any information.

He was like a fortress made to protect the palace.

And that...

'...it's disgusting.'

He still remembered the sight.

That blind faith Rein had reminded him of the citizens of the Southwestern Region.

To him, Rein was just another person indoctrinated by a stronger being.

He hated the thought. He hated the mentality.

He was loyal, sure, but he cared for himself more than anything else.

Rather than being a part of an influence that built its foundation on that kind of loyalty, he felt more comfortable in the presence of those who used each other for their own benefit.

At least that kind of people would act predictably in the crucial moment.

Nevertheless, he'd sold his soul to the Divine Order, and as he provided them with information about Void Palace and worked under their orders, he enjoyed everything they gave him in return.

This time, he was going to truly become a member of the order.

His old identity as the 7th Sword would be sacrificed, and he'd be reborn under a different name and appearance.

And for that to succeed, these two weaklings needed to die.

Damien had responded to Giovanni's question as he got engulfed in his thoughts. It was something along the lines of, "It's tough, but we can manage."

Whatever it was, Giovanni didn't care to hear it.

He was a member of the Divine Order now. This kind of acting was unfit for him.

Instead, couldn't they just torture the Demigod and extract information from his soul?

'That sounds far more convenient.'

Giovanni glanced at Damien and Rein.

'First things first...'

He raised his hand in the air.

'...let me kill that pest of a Sword.'

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Chapter 1430 7th Sword [3]

Giovani's hand flashed out before anyone could react.

He was precise, powerful, and left no room for mistakes.

If everything went according to plan, Rein would've completely died there and the little Demigod next to him would have followed.

However, that "little Demigod" wasn't so little after all.

Damien couldn't react to a God's strike yet, but he was more than capable of reading microexpressions from this distance.

The second Giovani showed signs of hostility, he acted.

He was perfectly on time.

Flash!

A flash of light appeared in the world, blinding Giovani for a moment. The flash soon expanded into a whole explosion as it reacted with the elements in the air.

BOOOOOOOOM!

A cloud of dust rose in the air between Damien and Giovani.

In that moment, multiple things happened.

Firstly, Rein disappeared.

It was far too dangerous to keep his withered body in the Heavenly World for now, so Damien sent him to the Sanctuary where his soul would be cared for by Alexander and his body would be sustained.

Secondly, another person arrived to replace Rein.

Most of those things that happened were caused by him.

Damien didn't have much to do. He didn't have the qualifications to interfere in what came next.

He stepped back, watching as the new man appeared, his sword just inches from Giovanni's throat.

Giovani barely blocked with his own sword, but if he had reacted a second too late, his head would've been gone already.

"...Nikolas!" Giovanni exclaimed.

"It's been a while, Seventh."

The man named Nikolas spoke with a stoic tone.

"I was curious as to why the Young Lord suddenly summoned me, but it seems you were the reason."

"Young Lord?! Who—"

Giovani's eyes went to Damien immediately, only to see the man waving back with a cheerful smile on his face.

"Giovani, I knew you were a bit special, but I never expected you to turn traitor."

BOOM!

Nikolas pushed strength into his arms, finishing through on the strike Giovanni blocked.

Of course, he was parried instantly. Giovanni redirected his sword into the ground as he made several steps of distance.

He almost lost because he was caught off guard, but he'd roughly understood the situation by now.

Void Palace's faceless Young Lord had finally appeared, and he came to save Rein while also being fully aware that he was a traitor.

And, instead of coming alone like an idiot, said Young Lord brought the 2nd Sword of Void Palace, Nikolas Faust, with him.

"Since it's come to this..."

It was too late to try anything like justification or fleeing.

Nikolas was known by the title of "Flashpoint Sword God" without reason.

Among Gods, there were barely any who could outmatch him in a bout of speed.

His sword skills obviously didn't need to be mentioned either. He was far better than the likes of Rein or Giovanni.

It could be said that he was on a completely different level.

However, Giovanni wasn't the same person anymore either.

He'd done a lot of work for the Divine Order in the past few centuries, and over that period of time, they'd rewarded him with several things that helped him increase his strength.

On top of that, he found that as he spilled more blood, the insights he'd gain into his sword path became far more numerous.

He was now traversing a path that suited him, so he made progress faster than ever before.

Even if it was Nikolas, he wouldn't go down easy.

'I don't want to take things to the Heavenly God Plane yet.'

Before that, he needed to find out how his skills fared against the 2nd Sword.

The same 2nd Sword who was currently watching his every move with a placid expression on his face.

At first, Nikolas didn't understand why Damien decided to bring him along.

The request really came out of nowhere.

Damien spent a lot of time getting to know the 6 Swords who were currently in the main palace and understanding them.

For the most part, they'd accepted his lordship and had expressed their sincerity towards him in various ways.

He, in turn, showed them the same sincerity, never belittling their position or trying to force them to work for him against their will.

When he came to Nikolas before leaving the palace, he didn't really specify "why" he needed protection or "where" they were even going.



Still, Nikolas followed along to see what kind of person the Young Lord was outside the palace, and Damien happily allowed him to watch,

From the beginning, Nikolas had been privy to his every movement through screens in the Sanctuary that provided him a real-time view of what was happening in the outside world.

Damien's clash against the homunculus put him on the edge of his seat, and while the imagery cut off for a moment at the end, leaving him no clues to understand how the homunculus ended up dead, he was still thoroughly impressed with Damien's performance.

Regardless of how it died, it was still at the level of a God.

However, even that raised questions.

Why did Damien need him if he was planning to risk himself and face Gods himself?

It turned out that Damien was never arrogant.

He never tried to fight someone who could truly utilize their Godly abilities.

And when the time came, even though that person was once an ally, he ruthlessly pulled the trigger, bringing Nikolas back to the Heavenly World.

In Nikolas' mind, the facts were clear.

The Young Lord was absolutely an amazing candidate for his position, and would make a spectacular Lord when he got the chance. He was a man who could instill hope into the dying palace and bring it the glory it deserved.

As for Giovani? It didn't matter how long they'd known each other.

He was a traitor, so the only thing he deserved was death.

Not a quick one, but one specially curated for filth like himself.

It was amusing to see Giovanni try to think his way out of the situation.

In his eyes, the young buck would always be the young buck.

No matter how much he trained in his bullshit bloody slaughter techniques, they wouldn't amount to anything.

The Giovanni he knew was a man who reached the limit of his potential and became obsessed with forceful growth through artificial means.

A man like that, even if he gave off an aura like the one Giovanni had now, would never be anything worth a cent.

Frankly, this fight was decided from the moment Nikolas appeared. The title of 2nd Sword meant more than Giovanni could ever know.

However, Nikolas was a bit skeptical.

Not because he doubted his own abilities, but because the Young Lord seemed to have another crazy idea.

His orders were simple.

"Find a way to lure Giovanni into the Heavenly God Plane."

It was easy to accomplish, barely even a task.

But what he said next was...

"Once you do that, the fight will be over. You don't have to waste energy on scum."

Nikolas didn't know what the Young Lord meant, but he was quite interested to find out.

So, without giving Giovanni another moment to think his way out of this situation, he attacked.

From that moment, Giovanni became nothing more than a puppet.

He was just dancing stupidly on a stage that he had yet to realize had been prepared for him.