

# Void 1481

Chapter 1481 Calamity [8]

It was amazing how time could pass differently for people regardless of their distance from each other.

It was almost like the human mind was replicating reality, as if every mind was a different cosmos that ran on a different law of time.

Just because two people spent their entire day together didn't mean they perceived time the same.

For one, the day could pass so fast it was like it never happened, and for the other, it could've been the longest day of their life.

The situation in the Gehenna Tribe was like this.

The battle Tiamat and Darius fought was fast-paced. An hour passed before they even realized it, because they were far too busy fighting to ever care about the time.

By the time Darius even realized how much time had passed, only ten minutes remained until day turned to night.

However, for the people fighting at the tribe, the hour that passed felt like an eternity.

Their numbers were already small, but they somehow managed to fight.

No matter how much they pushed, their enemies just kept coming.

The beautiful pure white glow that surrounded the Gehenna people as they fought was dwindling.

Their numbers were doing the same.

At the end of the day, they were indeed the advantaged side.

At a certain point, they stopped fighting head-on.

After losing over a hundred people, almost half of their battle strength, they began to fight in a more guerilla manner like they were used to.

The jungle was their home. Unlike the people from outside, they could use this environment as a weapon.

That was how they turned a one thousand-man army into one with the same numbers as them.

But how could there be such a convenient future?

The Gehenna Tribe had a lot of advantages.

But those advantages could only equalize their situation.

They were too disadvantaged for anything to save them other than a legitimate miracle.

One by one, the Gehenna warriors died.

From the hunters to the average men who picked up arms for their families, those who defended Gehenna became cold corpses on the ground.

There were only fifty of them left.

The fifty of them who were hunters from the start.

They fought with their lives on the line in a fashion that was practically suicidal.

They charged in, using every ounce of their power to kill.

It was a moment of hope and despair.

Every second spent fighting felt like hours. Every enemy that fell was replaced by another one, and it was only natural for the hunters to get weary.

Still, they persevered.

They were the last line of defense.

Plus, the Saintess was watching them fight.

They knew she couldn't help. Her role in the village had nothing to do with battle.

But her presence here, her decision to stay here instead of retreating with the rest, was enough to motivate them to push through.

And they did it.

Eventually, they managed to kill all of the enemies who came their way, leaving the battlefield stained in rivers of blood and sunken corpses.

It was only at this juncture when the hunters almost found relief that they remembered the presence of the Count.

Because Count Verex was clapping happily, ruining the silence that had fallen upon the jungle.

"Very nice!"

He grinned as he spoke.

He didn't care about the troops that died. He was happy enough with the show of slaughter that had been put on for him.

"Now, where is Cairo...?"

The Count barely paid attention to those who survived.

After all, Count Verex never killed weak beings with his own hands.

It wasn't something like morality that held him back.

Rather, he was a germaphobe in the most twisted definition of the word.

The Count believed that killing lesser beings with his own hands would stain them and ruin his purity.

Caissa and Cairo existed purely to take care of those he deemed too weak for him to kill personally.

With them gone, the Count wasn't going to touch the Gehenna people.

However, he would still make sure they died.

"Dear Saintess, are you happy?"

The Saintess stepped out of his vehicle.

A layer of malakh separated him from the bloodied ground as he walked towards the Saintess.

"You know what I desire. You have known for very many years. You could have just given it to me, but instead, you let your people die. Why is that? Do you truly hate them so much?"

He smilingly spoke. With every step he took, the surrounding blood was pushed away, revealing a clean path in the midst of madness.

"Saintess, why don't you speak?"

BOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

A massive explosion suddenly rang out from behind the Count.

A ground worm with scales that resembled those of the strongest beasts burst out of the ground. Its size was massive, taller than the tallest skyscrapers on Earth.

Its entrance was random, unexpected by all. However, luckily for the Gehenna Tribe, it wasn't aiming for them.

The worm didn't have eyes, but its senses were locked on the Count.

It was one of the many Ancients of the jungle. Sensing the presence of a rogue God who did not belong to the jungle, it arrived here.

The jungle had its own hierarchy.

There was no such thing as a God who could come here and flaunt his presence without being confronted by those who truly belonged here.

The Count turned around, an irked look on his face.

"And what might you be?"

He sneered at the worm, more than just annoyed that his fun had been interrupted.

"Leave this jungle."

The worm projected its voice through malakh. It was gruff and tremor-like, as if it was the voice of the earth itself.

"Who are you to command me?"

"Leave this jungle."



The worm didn't speak many words. It instead chose to flare its aura, attempting to scare the Count off.

But, of course, the Count wasn't such an easy target.

"Leave...? You wish for me to leave...?"

The Count's eyes were taunting, as if the notion was hilarious.

"Then prove you have the ability to remove me."

OOOOOOOOOOOOH!

The worm immediately charged.

It opened its massive mouth, lined with tens of rows of teeth, and slammed towards the Count.

It was a God itself.

It was a True Ancient, unlike the Uruk.

When it moved, the entire earth responded.

The Count was entrapped in a cage of rock, and as the massive beast approached, the remnants of the Gehenna Tribe behind him froze in fear.

That worm...they had never seen it before, but they knew its identity.

It was called the Sentinel, and it managed the safety of a large portion of the jungle.

It was said that the Sentinel never showed itself unless it was absolutely necessary, and anyone who had seen it was already dead.

Such a being was credited with the deaths of several powerful Ancients.

Since it was here, didn't that mean everyone was going to die?

The Gehenna Tribe was forced to watch without any ability to do anything as their greatest enemy became the only wall that saved them from death.

They were forced to realize that they were going to die no matter what happened.

But, truly, they'd rather die to an Ancient than the Count.

The scene of two great beings colliding was meant to be a grand one.

It was meant to cause great damage and be a battle among battles, a tale that would be passed down for generations.

Such a thing never took place.

The instant the Sentinel approached the Count, he put his hand out.

It was tiny compared to the beast, like a grain of sand in front of the ocean.

But that single grain of sand...

The instant the Sentinel came close enough to devour the Count, that single hand became its nightmare.

The Gehenna people didn't even see what happened.

In one second the two Gods created a scene that could be immortalized in history.

And in the next...

The Sentinel's body was a collection of meat chunks flying through the air.

Like a car hitting a wall at three hundred miles per hour, the Sentinel splattered in three directions, leaving everything behind the Count untouched.

Once again, his germaphobia showed itself.

And as he turned around, his image in the eyes of the Gehenna people became far more terrifying.

"Now then..."

He smiled as if nothing happened, looking at the Saintess.

"...shall we return to our conversation?"

Chapter 1482 Crown [1]

Every step Thalia took towards the pantheon became heavier after a certain point in time.

She felt a sinking feeling in her heart as if she was going to lose something important, but she had no way to identify the nature of those feelings.

Unlike Damien, she didn't even know there was an extinction-level event happening for the Gehenna Tribe right now.

Since she was young, she'd been told she was the Saintess' successor.

Her position had been decided at birth. She was chosen by the spirits.

Thalia never understood why.

She was definitely more talented than most people, but she wasn't fit to lead the tribe.

She was a hunter. That was her calling.

She always took the things she heard about her future as the Saintess with a grain of salt, barely believing she would ever actually get raised to that point.

But it happened.

She arrived here quite confidently because that was the mentality she held when going into anything and everything, but in reality, it was just now setting in the kind of responsibility that was being placed on her shoulders.

Was she ready for it?

'I'm not.'

She wasn't even close to being prepared to lead the entire tribe.

She'd shadowed the Saintess for years and knew exactly how much she had to do to keep the tribe stable. There were many threats that only the Saintess could deal with, things that threatened the tribe that the tribespeople didn't even know about.

She wasn't mature enough, nor was she stable enough in her own self to take the position that she was destined for.

Still, she pushed down the uncomfortable feeling in her chest.

No matter what it stemmed from, what was ahead of her was more important.

The second she entered that building, everything would change.

She wouldn't be able to live whimsically anymore.

She would willingly be trapping herself in a cage.

'But, that cage is the one I have chosen.'

She was a free-spirited person, so it was a hard decision to make, but she always knew the answer deep down.

She cared about the tribe more than anything else. For the tribe, she was willing to do anything.

She may have been able to achieve the position of Great Hunter easily and gained the respect of everyone, but if she wanted to bring her ambitions to reality, the Saintess role was her only choice.

If she wanted to bring the Gehenna Tribe as high as she envisioned it and introduce them to the wider world she saw through Damien and his peers, she needed the appropriate status.

Therefore, her hesitation was nothing but a fleeting feeling.

Her overwhelming confidence and the weight of her dreams allowed her to walk forward with pride, entering the pantheon to face her ancestors.

Thalia believed that she would see a bunch of heroic statues possessing souls, or maybe even the bare spirits of the ancestors themselves, but the pantheon was surprisingly dark and empty, almost as if it had been abandoned for a very long time.

The walls were covered in murals, stories of those this pantheon was created to worship. The ceiling was also decorated, however, it was in the image of the highest power, that being who governed all things.

The floor looked like it wasn't made of anything at all. Texturally and visually, it was no different from dirt.

This was a sort of symbolism, representing humanity's connection with the earth, its ability to create heroes, and its submission under the great cosmos.

Despite the beautiful decorations, Thalia still didn't see any hint of other presences in her vicinity.

'Could it be...that they have left...?'

She was wrong, but she had no way of knowing that. Ironically, Thalia didn't have much experience in the spiritual aspects of life.

Her instincts told her to stay where she was. If she left now, the opportunity awaiting her would vanish.

She could tell nothing else, and her environment showed no sign of hostility or danger.

If she took this as another sort of hunt, she could easily wait as long as she needed to.

Patience was a key skill for both a hunter and a leader.

Thalia had long grown used to waiting hours on end for her prey to show an opening. Waiting for her ancestors to acknowledge her was light work.

So she stood there for hours, waiting for any sort of response.

Unbeknownst to her, those same ancestors she was waiting for had been observing her since the moment she arrived at the pantheon.

"Her senses are incredible."

A man with hulking muscles and shining golden armor spoke, rubbing his chin in respect.

"Indeed. This Saintess is quite different from the others."

Another man, his peer, responded.

These conversations couldn't be heard by an average being.

There were tens of them in the pantheon, sharing opinions as they continued to watch Thalia.

Many of them were men, Great Hunters who'd accomplished miraculous feats for both the tribe and Gehenna itself.

A majority of the rest were women, Saintesses of the previous generations.

And unlike the men who were impressed by Thalia's qualities as a hunter, they all had furrowed brows and concerned expressions on their faces.



It was their job to bestow Thalia with her ability.

As such, they knew what kind of ability she'd be given.

"She already possesses a vestige of the past generation's Future Sight. If her own ability is compounded with that..."

A certain Saintess who lived almost ten generations ago spoke worriedly.

"...the current trajectory of the tribe...is it good or bad?"

A fellow Saintess finished her thought.

They couldn't tell.

Whatever Thalia became when she finished digesting her inheritance...

Whatever was happening in the outside world to provoke such a transformation...

...there was no way for them to tell whether it would be the tribe's fortune or its ruin.

"In the end, it is not our duty to decide. We can only grant her the power to persevere and watch over our descendant's journey."

The first-generation Saintess, the woman who originally allowed the Gehenna Tribe to form a connection with a Gehenna and become what it was today, she was the one who said those words.

And the others had no choice but to agree.

The fate of a Gehenna Saintess could be extremely cruel. They'd experienced it personally.

However, if a Saintess was able to persevere through that cruelty and come out the other side stronger...

Only one thing needed to be said.

There was a reason the Gehenna Tribe was once the ruler of the sacred jungle.

Thalia naturally didn't know any of this was happening.

She was still waiting for some sort of reaction from the pantheon.

She had yet to realize that something inside of her was already changing.

As the Saintesses of past generations blessed her qualities as a Saintess, and as the Great Hunters of past generations blessed her qualities as a warrior, a massive transformation started taking root in Thalia's body.

A power like nothing the Gehenna Tribe had ever seen started to bloom.

It was not a power meant to protect like most others had been, nor was it a power to foresee like the current Saintess had.

No, it was a power that showed only one future for the tribe Thalia would come to rule.

Conquest.

Chapter 1483 Crown [2]

Conquest.

It was a theme quite prevalent in Gehenna right now.

Though, it was on a completely different scale depending on who was experiencing it.

For the younger generations other than Thalia, this theme was relatively muted. They were being given inheritances that would strengthen them, but none of them could notice the subtle nuances behind the specific inheritances they were granted.

For Thalia herself, it was something mystical, a sort of destiny that would be decided by her hands.

And for Damien...

For Damien, it was at a scale nobody here could replicate.

With the mist as his guide, Damien went on a journey to find the Crown that existed in this realm.

The mist wouldn't tell him anything about it, but from what he could gather, the crown would be just as important to him as the mist itself.

Which, when remembering that the mist was one of the six concepts of Existence, was truly telling.

The Crown was hidden deep within Gehenna, at a place none could reach.

The mist around there was so thick it was almost solid.

The Crown had existed in Gehenna for a very long time. In a certain sense, it was the source of Gehenna's mystical nature.

It had been unguarded and untouched, because Gehenna itself was only open to those who had already become ethereal beings.

However, when the Gehenna Tribe managed to form a connection to the realm, things changed.

The mist was here from the start.

The mist was an omnipresent entity that existed everywhere and in everything. It was one layer of the fabric of Existence, and it could observe all things.

It noticed the Crown's presence long ago and had been carefully watching over it, but when Gehenna became connected to the Real Plane, in the Sacred Abyss Universe, at that, the mist couldn't sit still.

It started to maintain a more physical presence in this realm that both inhibited people aiming for the crown and gave it the ability to communicate with living beings.

Its first goal had been accomplished thoroughly thus far, but its second was only fulfilled when Damien appeared.

And, whether it was coincidence or destiny, Damien was the man who was fated to wear that crown.

The mist was able to alter reality itself to control those within the realm. Around where the crown was located, anyone who got close would be turned around, their souls completely forgetting the existence of such a location.

No matter what, the mist couldn't directly interfere with reality, so this was the extent of it, but it was surprising the number of people and spirits that had been brainwashed by this place.

When Damien arrived there, on the other hand, he was completely fine.

He was now the owner of that mist.

He couldn't control it unless it allowed him to, but he would not be affected by its mystery any longer.

Surprisingly enough, as the mist itself cleared, Damien found that he was in the same place he started.

In front of him was a path that led to nowhere, while behind him was an arch that led to a very familiar plaza.

"It's over there..." Damien asked wryly.

The mist gave him a positive response, of course.

"Haa, this destiny stuff is really..."

If he had chosen to move in the opposite direction when he first arrived in this realm, what would have happened?

It was pointless to think about it, but Damien was curious regardless.

As he walked that path, he was tempted to think about cause and effect, about the actions he took in the past, and how reality itself would have shifted if he had chosen another route.

Causality was a strange thing Damien didn't quite understand.

Destiny was the same.

He always felt like he was someone who forged his own path. A path as twisted as him couldn't be forged by anyone else.

However, at several times throughout his life, he'd felt like he was being led by some strange force.

To a certain point, it could be described by his own actions.

After all, he did influence reality from the Void for a period of time after the war ended.

His father also played a part in it. Like the legacies left on Death Emperor Star, Dante had planted several things in the lower universe for the purpose of Damien's quick growth.

But that still wasn't enough to explain it all.

Especially when he came to the Heavenly World. The instinctive feeling that parts of his path were being altered by something greater never left him, and he was hard-pressed to ignore that feeling.

What was he supposed to do about it, though?

There was no way for him to find out whether his feeling was true or not.

He could only continue on his path and believe in himself. As long as he was confident in his actions, they were his own.

And he was confident as he entered the vicinity of the crown.

This area was similar to the one he started in. It was also a plaza with an organized look. It was surrounded by statues as well, but these were statues of men, monsters, gods, and demons.

In the middle of the plaza wasn't a foundation, but a pedestal that seemed somewhat mundane compared to its position.

Damien didn't say anything as he approached it.

The Crown had a specific aura around it.

To Damien, it felt extremely familiar, yet extremely far away.

When he got within a few feet of it, he started to hear indistinct whispering. He couldn't make out any of the words. The language seemed unfamiliar as well.

There was one thing he caught, though.

The Crown of Realis.

In other words, the Emperor's Crown.

Its name resounded in his head, a grandiose imagery accompanying it.

But when he approached close enough to see it, it looked quite dull.

"It's...incomplete."

The Crown was covered in wear. It looked like it was made of wood, but when Damien picked it up, he could obviously feel that it was metal.

It didn't seem too ornate, but it also seemed like it was meant to be ornate at some point.

It looked like somebody had stopped halfway through its creation and left it to rot in a corner.

Yet, as the cool metal touched Damien's hands, he felt an immediate connection with it.

'This crown...is not as it seems.'

He raised it above his head slowly.

Imperceptibly, the surrounding statues turned their heads to watch him.

Damien slowly lowered the crown until he was wearing it, and as he let his energy calmly circulate through his body...

The crown came to life.

It aggressively sucked up energy of any kind, with a particular preference towards Void Energy.

Damien gritted his teeth as he coped with the sudden change.

He allowed the crown to do as it pleased, however, he also maintained control over his mana, disallowing it from going too crazy.

Energy boomed into the surroundings as the crown's consumption got higher.

The crown itself began to glow, the debris on its surface melting away to reveal its true luster.

Damien's eyes were wide open.

But they were not the color of amethyst purple that had come to be known and loved.

No, Damien's eyes were like galaxies, shining with the light of billions of suns.

Chapter 1484 Crown [3]

What did Damien see?

As his eyes began to resemble true celestial entities, what did he experience?



The truth was, it couldn't be described in just a few words.

What Damien saw, in essence, was reality.

In the past, he once had the chance to gaze at existence through the lens of the Void. This time, he was able to see reality from the lens of Existence.

It didn't seem like there was much of a difference between these things, but it was actually quite significant.

After all, Existence was quite a few steps below the Void, even if it was directly under it in the cosmic hierarchy.

Damien also didn't have the ability to change anything this time. He wasn't able to maneuver himself and see specific events or change the way ordained events took place.

He could only watch as he was being shown.

It was a completely different kind of experience.

Damien wasn't the one in control this time, so the things he was being shown weren't what he wanted to see.

But they still had their own particular order.

Damien saw the birth of planets, the birth of stars, the birth of galaxies, and the birth of universes.

Just the same, he saw their deaths.

The life cycle of a cosmos was similar to the life cycle of a human in many ways, however, there was something special about the images Damien was being shown aside from that.

It wasn't a true material feeling, but something from the depths of his heart.

Damien had never seen these galaxies or universes before. None of them looked similar to the True Void Universe he was used to. Still, he felt a connection to each and every one of them.

The experience was similar to when he first became a Celestial, as if his existence had become bigger than itself.

But what did those images mean?

To begin with, the Emperor's Crown wasn't a treasure. It didn't have an ability, and it didn't necessarily empower Damien in any way.

When its wear and rust peeled off, revealing the beautiful pentacolor shine of the crown's true appearance, it didn't do anything special or cause any sort of scene outside of the change in Damien's eyes.

The crown had seven main jewel slots.

Six of them were lined up side by side, circling the entire crown, while the seventh sat above them.

Currently, only three of the jewel slots were filled.

The jewels themselves couldn't be easily identified, as they weren't jewels that existed in reality, but they shone beautifully, each in their own unique color, and truly made the crown whole.

However, the presence of the four missing jewels was definitely felt when one looked at it.

The Emperor's Crown was meant to be worn by the one who could possess all seven jewels.

And these jewel slots, at least according to what Damien could glean, were reserved for the concepts of Existence.

The three that he already had, Order, Harmony, and Mist, manifested in their own images, setting themselves in the crown the instant they recognized it.

When Damien found the other three concepts of Existence, the bottom row of the crown's jewels would surely be filled.

But what about the last one?

As Damien traveled through all of Existence under the crown's guidance, he had to wonder what that last jewel was.

He had to wonder what he didn't know yet.

At this point in life, Damien had become so incredibly powerful that it was rarer to find something he couldn't infer on his own than something he could.

Most of reality's truths had been revealed to him in the various encounters he'd had in the past, which inevitably caused his spirit of adventure to dim.

What more was there for him to do but grow into his power?

That was how he thought before he entered this place and found the Gehenna Tribe.

He'd been going through the motions, living with only his goals in mind. As a result, he'd neglected some more emotional aspects of life.

He wasn't unaware of this change in his behavior, but he allowed it to happen because he believed it was necessary.

He had to become powerful again, and he had to regain the status he held in the lower universe. Otherwise, how could he possibly focus on other things with peace of mind?

The threats he faced were simply too big, so big that even he had difficulty imagining them at first.

He didn't have time to enjoy himself.

He held himself to that belief until recently, but as he stared into the starry sky of the Sacred Abyss Universe, his thoughts began to change.

As he spent time with the Gehenna Tribe, learning their culture and fully immersing himself in their lives, he found that there were indeed things he still didn't know and things for him to enjoy.

They were just so small that he'd forgotten to look back at them when his power got so immense.

Existence didn't just encompass the larger things. It wasn't just a grand concept that had implications beyond what anyone could imagine.

Existence was the greatest of Gods, the peak of all peaks.

But it was just as much the life of a common farmer, and the techniques he used to make sure he could earn his family a happy life.

The crown helped Damien understand himself. It showed him the things he wanted to see.

Only, it didn't show him directly at all. Instead, it analyzed his subconscious, judging his worth.

The Crown of Realis. It was called the Emperor's Crown because only such an existence could bear its weight.

And as it accepted Damien as its owner, it allowed him to view those same images more clearly.

It showed him the deepest desires in his heart.

Visions of the future, visions of the present, and even recollections of the long-forgotten past flew by Damien's eyes in rapid bursts.

And among them...

A strange four-dimensional space, a tesseract.

It was a microcosm of existence, yet a reality of its own.

It was a place where the common laws of nature simply didn't exist, a place where the average man was never meant to go.

However, within this tesseract, there was indeed a man.

A man that Damien recognized very well.

His eyes widened.

His heartbeat sped up.

At that exact moment, the images he saw changed. Like a camera zooming out, Damien's sight was thrown out of the tesseract and into its vicinity.

His field of view continued to expand. What was once a nondescript scenery suddenly became a location Damien was able to recognize.

And as he put his everything into remembering the images he was seeing, he gained certainty on what exactly that place was.

It was something he'd been looking for. He didn't think he'd be able to find its location easily, and he definitely didn't expect it to appear in front of him like this.

It was the source of most of his worries, and the exact goal he was currently working towards.

There was no doubt about it.

That place...

That place was the Celestial Prison.

Chapter 1485 Crown [4]

What did it mean to rule?

To be a leader, to be responsible for the lives of countless people, what did that feel like?

To some, it was intoxicating. Such power to view others as ants was exactly the goal of a large portion of people, and though they were considered leaders, they did not lead.

They used their power to fuel their own selfish desires while those under them suffered.

Naturally, they were not true rulers.

An Emperor would only ever be as good as his Empire. What was the use of an Emperor when the people were all dead or impoverished.

What proper qualities of a leader did such an Emperor possess?

Perhaps they were domineering, perhaps they had the arrogance of a leader that would allow them to make great strides in negotiations with foreign powers, but none of that mattered.

When Thalia was asked what it meant to rule, she answered simply.

She'd seen the Saintess work hard for the people. She'd seen the elderly woman suffer in ways nobody her age should have suffered so that her people could thrive.

She understood sacrifice, and she understood honor.

To her, a ruler was somebody who could maintain prosperity for their people.

She did not want the Gehenna Tribe to live as the weakest force in the sacred jungle.

She didn't want them to suffer for the sake of food, always wary of the Ancients who might one day think of them as prey.

She wanted to give them better lives, lives where they could live safely and enjoy serenity whenever they wanted to.

She wanted to give them a life where they would never have to suffer again.

So what did it mean to rule?

It meant having the loyalty of the people. It meant having a strong heart that could stand against any threat. It meant truly becoming one with the body one governed.

At first, Thalia didn't consider herself a ruler.

Thalia was extremely devoted to her tribe. That was a well-known fact.

In terms of the aspects most people usually ignored, she knew she'd excel.

But she never believed herself powerful enough to achieve her ambitions.

No matter how she looked at it, it was impossible for her to become someone capable of ruling the sacred jungle or even escaping it.

Actually, Damien was the one who inadvertently helped her out of that mindset.

What he showed her was power achieved through hard work and effort. What he showed her was a will that transcended such petty doubts.

When she went to see him that fateful day in the jungle, she asked him what he did for power, what power did for him, and most importantly, how he became a monster.

His answer was simpler than she expected.

It wasn't something grand or philosophical. It wasn't a hypothetical that really didn't answer anything at all.

He told her clearly.

Power would change her.

But as long as she remained comfortable in that change, it didn't matter what she ended up as.



As long as her people could thrive, it didn't matter what she had to do.

She realized then that she was willing to make the sacrifice. She was willing to give up everything for their sake.

So when she came to the pantheon, while she did enter somewhat fearfully, it was completely gone by the time a few hours had passed.

Thalia sat on the floor in a meditative posture. She'd been sitting like this for a while after realizing nothing would happen if she continued to tire herself out by keeping her guard up.

She closed her eyes and thought over the qualities she possessed, the qualities she needed to improve upon, and a realistic plan for the future development of the tribe.

She inadvertently found herself in possession of a ruler's mindset, and once she realized it, she stopped doubting herself entirely.

She accepted her destiny.

She accepted her role.

Truly, that was all she needed to do.

Unlike Damien, she walked a path that was watched over by countless beings who only wanted the best for her and her people.

All she needed to do was express her willingness and show them that she was ready, and they'd support her to the fullest of their capabilities.

It wasn't just Damien being crowned today.

There were two enthronements taking place, only, on two completely different scales.

For Damien, it was an enthronement that really only served as ceremony.

The position he was trying to claim was out of reach, and, at most, his crown merely gave him the qualifications to fight for that position.

However, for Thalia, this was everything.

A crown began to form on her head.

The current Saintess had a feathered crown. She was gentle and reserved, quietly working for her clan.

Thalia's path wouldn't be anything close to hers.

As Thalia's crown formed, a wave of gasps spread through the incorporeal spirits who watched her enthronement.

It was pure black iron.

The crown was etched with a domineering pattern with countless grooves, as if each and every one was to be filled with the blood of her enemies.

It was spiked in four directions, almost as if it was meant to be used as a weapon.

The metallic blackness that was almost a darker shade of grey gave off an aura of icy indifference. It made one wonder if seeing it was a sign of death or prosperity.

The crown was not covered in jewels. It wasn't extravagant at all.

It was definitely muted, but not in a way that symbolized peace like the current Saintess' crown.

Thalia's crown was one of an iron-blooded empress. It was a crown that prophesized her tumultuous future.

It made the worry of her ancestors exceed its previous high by a large margin, but when it found its place atop her head, Thalia felt strangely comforted.

She could also see it.

Her destiny.

The crown didn't hide anything from her. It made very clear exactly what Thalia would be faced with as she moved through life.

If she couldn't handle the adversity, then she needed to forfeit her position now.

That was the message it gave her.

And she rightfully ignored it.

If adversity was enough to bring her down, she would have died a long time ago.

She didn't live the brutal life of a hunter, the only position in the tribe where death was common, for fun and games.

She was prepared for this day.

She would not give it all up just because it would be difficult.

That was the clarification the world needed.

That was the mentality Gehenna needed to see.

And as it gave its approval of her worth, as her ancestors funneled their power into her, Thalia started to feel something budding inside of her.

It was different from barrakh, different from the way it was stored too, but it also seemed like some sort of energy container.

This entity was extremely connected to her. While she didn't understand the concept, it had made itself one with her core, binding with her soul.

It was her Saintess ability.

And it manifested in her head as a single word.

'Domination.'

Chapter 1486 Wrath [1]

Gehenna didn't have a pattern for when it appeared.

It would show itself to the world when it was needed, otherwise hiding away where it was meant to be.

Gehenna and the real world weren't supposed to have any interaction in the first place.

But since they'd become connected, Gehenna had become inextricably tied to destiny.

Sometimes, generations could pass without any sign of it.

Of course, the Saintess would always come in contact with it somehow, but for a majority of the Saintesses, Gehenna appeared in their minds, not in person.

They were granted power in their sleep, blessed by the real secretly.

But this time, Gehenna appeared.

It came specifically for the two enthronements that were taking place within its borders right now.

Damien was enlightened by the Crown of Realis. He was able to understand its purpose, and as he was shown the location of the Celestial Prison, his mood became extremity calm, almost disturbingly so.

On the other side, Thalia's crown formed and put the weight of responsibility on her shoulders. She felt fulfilled, as if she'd finally found her truth in this world.

The two of them had accomplished what they needed to do in this place.

They'd both met the objects of their destinies.

Therefore, Gehenna had no more purpose in the real world.

Whether it was coincidence or something planned by the mystical forces of this realm, the lesser geniuses who entered the realm also finished digesting their inheritances around the same time.

That was why, as soon as Damien and Thalia stood up, their eyes and minds clear and their crowns proudly displayed on their heads...

Gehenna began to change.

It was time for those geniuses to return to the real world.

It was time for them to see the state of the Gehenna Tribe.

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Blood.

There was so much of it.

The Saintess had never seen so much blood before, not in real life at least.

But she'd seen it endlessly in her dreams.

She'd seen it, but regardless of what she did, she couldn't change it.

What could she have done?

She had no fighting power.

Her power only allowed her to see things other people couldn't see. She didn't have the ability to fight, nor did she have the ability to protect.

She'd managed thus far, because she was destined to reach this point, but she didn't believe it would last much longer.

She absolutely believed in destiny.

How could she not?

Ever since she was a young child, she'd been seeing visions of the future. There wasn't a single time when those visions didn't come true.

Even when the Uruk came the first time and killed so many of the tribespeople, she knew it was coming.

Back then, she was younger. Even though she'd been the Saintess for a few decades already, she still maintained hope that she could change things.

And she tried.

She did everything in her power and used all of the tribe's resources to try and save them, but still, the Uruk came and killed.

The tribe managed to survive, but it still lost some of its best hunters, including Thalia's parents.

That was when she lost all hope.

No matter what she did, it was impossible to change the future she saw.

The ongoing events only made her more hopeless.

"Saintess, what's wrong?"

That putrid creature spoke again.

He was the reason for all of this.

His petty greed was the reason why all of her tribe's warriors were dead.

The entire 250-man group that took up arms to protect their families was lying on the ground as nothing more than bloody puddles.

And the Count didn't even touch them once.

He was a germaphobe, after all.

If one asked how they died, however, nobody would be able to answer.

They just died.

It was like the world itself wanted them gone.

The Count refused to kill those he considered lesser beings. That was indeed his code, and it was indeed the reason why people like Cairo and Caissa were always around him.

But when Cairo and Caissa were both gone...?

Naturally, the moment would come when such a situation arose, and the Count was long prepared for it.

His method was simple.

If he did want someone dead, he just needed someone else to kill for him.

Cairo and Caissa were his attendants. They didn't just take care of the trash, they also had their own jobs they'd have to do at times.

Whenever he went on an excursion, the Count genuinely kept a third person around him, a true shadow guard, whose existence was quite literally only for the purpose of killing ants.



It was an inefficient method at its core, but it was also the easiest and most abusive, which was always the path Count Verex would choose over any other.

The fifty hunters who managed to survive until the end all died before they knew what happened.

As their bodies dropped to the ground, the Count approached the Saintess with the same smile on his face.

"Come on, now. Don't glare at me like that. Maybe a few decades ago it would have done something to me, but you've gotten a bit old now, haven't you?"

He really didn't care.

He didn't care about the hatred in her heart or the grief she felt about the deaths she'd witnessed.

He didn't care about the people he'd killed, nor did he care about the ones hiding away in the village.

He was here for one thing.

And by now, he was well aware that the Saintess had no plans of giving it to him.

"What's the point?" He asked.

The Saintess didn't reply for obvious reasons, but he continued talking anyway.

"I really don't understand your hesitation, but that's not what I'm asking right now. Rather, what's the point of me being here if you won't give me anything?"

He needed to find Gehenna. The Saintess was the shortest path there, but if she didn't cave, he didn't have the patience to force her.

"You know I can find that place on my own if I really try hard enough. I thought I could get a pass from you and be on my way, but now I feel like I've done all this work for nothing. Isn't that a shame?"

A shame?

A shame...?!

That's how he considered all this slaughter and bloodshed?

In the end, to him, it was just a shame that he wasted his time?

The Saintess was boiling over with so much rage that her face was turning red, but again, there was nothing she could do as he approached closer and closer.

Until he was standing right in front of her.

"Saintess, you know what comes next, don't you?"

The Saintess closed her eyes and turned her head to the sky.

She knew.

She'd seen this time many times before.

"Then..."

The Count grinned.

"...let's get it over with."

Unlike her people, the Saintess was someone worthy.

And since she refused to cooperate, since she had no use to him...

The Count raised his hand, and in one swift motion, he impaled his arm through her heart, holding it in his hand as it protruded out of her back.

The Saintess coughed up a mouthful of blood, which the Count proceeded to gleefully lick off his cheek.

And as they stood in silence, almost frozen in time...

Space shook.

Gehenna really was a cruel mistress.

It was at a moment like this, just a moment too late, when it decided to return them to the world.

And the first thing both Damien and Thalia saw was that.

The scene of the Saintess' pointless death.

Chapter 1487 Wrath [2]

What were they expecting?

It certainly wasn't this.

Of all things they could return to, the corpses of their warriors and the sight of their Saintess with her heart in the hands of a man they'd never seen before was not what they expected in the slightest.

And how were they to react?

For most of them, the only answer was shock.

Those other than Damien and Thalia were shocked into a stupor. The instant they appeared in the world, their bodies froze and their minds did as well.

There was nothing that could be done to snap them out of this state. Until they could accept the scene before them, they would remain frozen.

There was no sound.

The atmosphere was eerily silent as the Count processed the situation and the geniuses tried to regain their wits.

That only made it worse.

Because everyone was forced to listen to the Saintess' blood as it poured out of her chest and made impact with the ground.'

Still, not everyone was frozen so thoroughly.

Thalia was definitely petrified at the start.

She couldn't easily comprehend the scene.

After all, she had no knowledge of the happenings of the outside world. She didn't even know there was danger approaching until she exited Gehenna to this carnage.

It was natural that she couldn't accept it.

But more than anything, what she couldn't believe was the sight of the Saintess before her eyes.

She knew how it usually went.

No two Saintesses could live in the same generation. Once one was crowned, the last would lose their power and slowly pass away.

This wasn't slow at all.

This was murder.

The murder of the main parental figure she'd had in her life since the day her parents died.

Thalia felt the exact emotions one would expect of her. It was a huge bundle of negativity and grief that clouded her mind and made her want to recklessly charge at the enemy ahead.

However, the crown she wore pulsed, calming her emotions.

She had to accept it.

The Saintess was dead, and the tribe was facing a calamity.

She was the new Saintess, effective immediately, and before she could grieve, she had to find a way to save her people.

Thalia's eyes dulled.

She shut off all emotion and extraneous thought.

She could only look at the bigger picture. She was not allowed to grieve or panic. Just like her predecessor before her, she had to suffer for the sake of the tribe.

But Damien didn't.

Damien's first thought was

'...I was too late.'

He knew the Count was coming.

He thought that as long as he moved as fast as possible, he'd be able to save them.

He did move fast. He didn't play around at all or spend any time exploring the parts of Gehenna he didn't need to.

Even his long interaction with the mist led to him comprehending a concept of Existence, so it was absolutely necessary.eastern fantasy

He did everything he could.

Yet, he'd arrived too late.

With an injury like that, Damien could not heal her.

Unlike him, the Saintess was close to a regular human, especially in offensive and defensive capabilities. The second her heart was removed, her fate was set.

Was there any way to save her?

'There isn't.'

If there was, she wouldn't have done so much to make sure he didn't find out about the danger until after he was already in Gehenna.

Then, what was he supposed to feel now?

Damien couldn't tell.

He'd gotten close to the Gehenna Tribe, but due to the Saintess' machinations, he couldn't feel the same emotions for them as he felt towards his own people.

That was supposed to make him unwillingly indifferent to a scene like this, right?

Wrong.

It made him even angrier.

Because he understood how much care went into the Saintess' actions.

She didn't need to do that.

Damien was just a guest. He had fate with Gehenna, sure, but the Gehenna Tribe had no reason to welcome him.

He was just an outsider, after all. In the end, his presence was not a benefit to their society.

Yet, what had the Gehenna Tribe been but welcoming since his arrival?

Even when they doubted him, when did they ever treat him poorly?

They were an unreasonably kind people, a kind of people that simply didn't exist in the world today.

Damien knew that kindness was a sin.

However, he couldn't help but respect those who'd managed to somehow preserve it.

When even those people were swallowed by the greed and vice of the world

The immutable rage in his chest wasn't a laughing matter at all.

The Emperor's Crown that he possessed didn't have many effects in the short term.

It was currently in an unsummoned state, but it was eternally existing atop Damien's head in a dimension nobody could sense or measure.

And as long as it was there, Damien would never experience setbacks or rejection from laws, regardless of where he was.

The instant he returned to the Sacred Abyss Universe, its laws stopped resisting him.

And the instant its laws stopped resisting him, he comprehended them.

Instantly.

He didn't need time to sit and comprehend them when he'd personally experienced them for over a year. All he needed was permission from the cosmos itself for those comprehensions to enter his soul.

He had it now.



That influx of power combined with the emotion burning in his heart

Needless to say, it was nothing good.

Damien stepped forward.

He looked back at Thalia, who was still shaking, but whose eyes were slowly becoming more grounded.

And he turned back to the Count.

Count Verex grinned.

"Are these the returnees?"

He glanced at the Saintess' dying self mockingly.

"It seems my goal has come to me before I had to go chasing it. Isn't that wonderful?"

The Saintess glared at him with every ounce of emotion she could muster.

She knew she was dying.

She knew she wouldn't last long.

This was the moment her prophecies ended at.

She couldn't see further than this, not because there was nothing else, but because she was destined to die here.

She'd prepared for it.

lightsvel She'd been ready for it.

However, as she turned her head and saw the pitiful appearances of her young geniuses, she felt a pang in her heart.

She really didn't want to go.

She didn't want to leave the tribe alone at this critical moment.

But she had no choice but to entrust everything to Thalia.

As she felt her final breaths approaching, the Saintess turned to Damien, a weak smile on her face.

One word.

She had one word.

"...run."

With that one word, she tried to warn him.

And that only made him angrier.

Damien took a deep breath.

'I've held it in for a long time.'

Rage, anguish, negative emotion in general

He'd been containing too much of it within him.

But he couldn't keep it in any longer.

When he looked at the Count, the only thing he saw was someone who needed to die by his hands.

There was no need for conversation with someone like that.

There was no need for negotiation.

Damien's instincts kicked in, and he instantly disappeared.

In the next moment, the sacred jungle was torn to shreds.

A battle of untold proportions had begun.

Chapter 1488 Wrath [3]

The Count was not anywhere near the strongest of the Gods who ruled the Sacred Abyss Universe.

He was not even the strongest among the 32 Counts, and above them, there were 16 Dukes and 4 Grand Dukes below the Dark God.

When he was compared to his peers, Count Verex didn't have much to show aside from his massive ambitions.

As such, he wasn't respected by very many people, at least of those who were on the same level as him.

He always hated that.

But since he was such a twisted person, their animosity only worsened his bad qualities.

The Count wanted the Crown of Realis for multiple reasons, but none of them were worthy of the crown itself.

He wanted to become strong enough to step on his peers.

At the end of the day, he was just thirsting for validation.

Damien knew that.

For some reason, as he looked at the Count, all of the man's habits and behaviors became clear to him.

The environment had slowed down as well, not that it mattered.

Damien was currently seeing everything in frozen time. He was already blasting towards the Count, and he was teleporting so there really wasn't much time to be slowed in the first place.

Still, he felt like he had more than enough time to analyze the Count before striking him.

'Have I gotten stronger?'

He didn't know when.

Nothing he had received in Gehenna should've made him stronger. The mist was like a talkative companion, while the crown was more of an invisible aura that would provide no benefit until a certain point.

But something like this...

Why did he feel like the Count would be easy to defeat?

Why did he feel like he could absolutely crush this man if he let loose his full strength?

Damien was already holding himself back, you know?

Even under the suppression of the Sacred Abyss Universe's laws, Damien held himself back so as to not scare off the people of the Gehenna Tribe.

It had been over a year, even more than that if counting the pseudo-time of Gehenna, since Damien had actually been able to feel the full extent of his power.

As for the last time he was able to actually use it...wasn't that back when he fought that homunculus and charged through the Divine Order's territory?

He could feel it bubbling inside him now.

He could feel the Ananta Matrix roaring, infused with a new sense of spirituality it had never possessed before.

He held back so the people he cared for in this realm would not be harmed or terrified by his power.

But they were dead now.

So what was he holding back for?

Power was meant to be used.

Especially if it was to exterminate pests like Count Verex.

Saying that the entire sacred jungle was torn to pieces the instant Damien attacked was not an exaggeration.

He made multiple moves at once.

Firstly, he placed a barrier around Thalia and the group of geniuses so that they wouldn't be harmed by the collateral damage of the fight.

Secondly, he put a barrier around the village that froze time, just in case there was anybody inside who could be saved.

And thirdly, once safety precautions had been taken, he let loose his aura.

BOOOOOOOOOOOM!

The explosive force was massive simply because of the sheer weight of the aura.

Damien's power spread in every direction like the sharpest blade in existence, tearing down the trees for several tens of millions of kilometers and killing several tens of thousands of creatures.

A massive patch was formed in the sacred jungle, and that was before Damien even reached the Count.

Once he did, he attacked again, not giving the Count a single chance to fight back.

BOOM!

A punch landed with a force enough to generate more heat than a thousand suns.

It slammed against the Count's face, cracking his jaw and sending him flying backwards several million kilometers.

The Count's eyes immediately turned serious.

'There was such a being in this remote tribe?'

He immediately stopped underestimating the enemy when a punch that was thrown without energy to support it managed to injure him.

He couldn't sense any sort of Godly aura from Damien, but since the man could harm him, he had to be powerful.

Which meant he also couldn't joke around anymore.

The Count raised his mana—

BOOOOOOOOOOOM!

Damien arrived before he could do anything.

His energy acted like a machine.

It was already coagulated into an attack before even Damien had a chance to control it, and the instant he arrived, it burst forth.

It was an energy close to Existence. Far closer to Existence than Damien had ever been.

The Count wasn't sent flying this time. Instead, he was slammed into the ground, his body creating a crater that only continued to widen as more and more force was thrown into him.

"ARGH!"

His bones shattered, and blood spewed out of his mouth.

He roared in pain, his eyes filled with hatred for the man he'd only just seen for the first time.

But Damien didn't care.

Damien was in the mood to rampage.

And his power was supporting him wholeheartedly.

Damien's energy was acting different than usual. Right now, it acted as if it had its own sentience, carrying out Damien's will without him even having to provoke it.

'This is the mist's doing.'

He felt the spirituality in the Ananta Matrix a while ago, but he didn't realize the reason until now.

When the mist integrated with his systems, it became like his personal assistant.

As it was connected to his mind, body, and soul, it could execute his will with a precision that even he himself couldn't naturally reach.

The mist, in a certain sense, could be considered synonymous with energy itself.



Therefore, when it had control, it could do things humans could never imagine no matter how strong they were.

With its support, with the Emperor's Crown's support, and with his own power...

Damien had finally reached a point where he could kill weaker Gods without tricks or schemes.

He just had to fight.

Which, in this situation, was perfect.

Because he really, really wanted the Count's blood to drench his hands.

Damien dropped his eyes. The Count had sunk almost a kilometer into the ground before he was able to neutralize the force pushing him down.

At the moment, he was glaring at Damien like he was his worst enemy, and his malakh was filling the crater with ethereal blackness.

It didn't matter.

It would never matter.

'You think you can fight...?'

Damien didn't say any words.

He merely glanced at the Count with clear mockery oozing from his gaze.

His intent could be read clearly.

This wouldn't be a fight.

Damien wouldn't allow that.

This would be a one-sided massacre.

And the entirety of the territory the Count ruled would witness it.

Count Verex slammed his foot into the ground and shot out of the crater.

He was aiming at Damien, his mana prepared to exert a technique that would surely raze countless kilometers of society to the ground.

But, again, nobody needed to get their expectations up.

Just like the Uruk before him, the Count was just a target in Damien's eyes.

And a target that Damien set his sights on could only ever have one fate.

Chapter 1489 Wrath [4]

Existence.

Damien still couldn't fathom how to properly use it.

But in a moment like this, it seemed to fight alongside him, executing the imagination he couldn't access.

The mist knew those things that Damien couldn't fathom.

Now that he had it, he had gained the creativity necessary to utilize Existence as a law.

It was a benefit he never expected when he first allowed the semi-sentient entity into his body.

Nevertheless, it was great.

Really.

BOOOOOOOOOM!

Another explosion rang out, but the force didn't come from mana.

It came from Count Verex's body surpassing the speed of light as his body flew out of the crater.

He was a God in his own right. He refused to be an easy target for anyone, especially not some random person like Damien.

His body disappeared beyond the capability of the human eye. In most cases, this would make him invisible to all perception.

Damien wasn't "most cases."

Damien could easily sense him moving through the folds of reality. Even if he couldn't, he could use the All-Seeing Eyes to enhance his visual perception until he could see him.

Regardless, there was quite literally no way for the Count to escape his sight.

BANG!

The sound was fast.

The Count arrived instantly and cut forth with his arm. Malakh flared into the atmosphere and created a massive sword filled with an aura of blood and wrath.

This blade was one of the Count's main killing techniques, God-Killing Blade. For most opponents, this alone was enough to slaughter them.

After all, the laws within were no joke. At their height, the moment they came in contact with an opposing aura, they'd infiltrate and corrupt, giving the Count full control over his enemy's body.

However, the previous sound didn't come from this.

With the God-Killing Blade in his arms, the Count slashed at Damien's head.

Damien hadn't reacted yet, almost as if he couldn't see the Count's movements, however...

BANG!

That was when the sound happened.

The Count didn't even see Damien move. He didn't even realize something had happened until he found himself flying high into the sky.

The pain came later. Far later. So far later, in fact, that it didn't come until after Damien had already struck him again.

BOOM!

BOOM!

BOOM!

BOOM!

Damien used physical strength alone. With Existence supporting him, every impact was amplified a thousandfold, slamming into Count Verex with the weight of an entire galaxy.

The Count was shot further and further into the sky, his body spinning like a rag doll as he lost complete control.

The God-Killing Blade was unsummoned because the Count's mana was thrown into chaos by the strikes. He was left unarmed, and while he was trying and trying to regain control...

BOOM!

Damien slammed into him one more time.

As his body entered what looked like the stratosphere of this world, he encountered a wall he'd never felt before.

Damien grinned.

'As expected.'

The invisible walls that separated this territory from everything else.

If everything was as normal, these walls would have only restricted him, allowing the Count to move freely since he was a denizen of this world.

However, again, the mist allowed Damien to use Existence to his advantage.

The Count was subjected to the same walls, and as his body went too far into the territory's borders, he slammed into the ceiling with the insane speed he'd gathered from Damien's continuous strikes.

His body flattened like a pancake.

Blood splattered across the invisible ceiling before raining down to drench the clouds below.

Count Verex's body was ruined. Black smoke appeared from his internals and covered him, evidently some kind of healing ability, but it wasn't able to do much.

Practically all the blood in his body had been forced out of his pores. His bones were a powder, and his muscles had become no more than a pile of mush that sludged together with his organs to occupy the deflated frame that his skin had become.

But the Count wasn't dead yet.

Damien could sense his life signs very clearly.

That putrid breath that signified the existence of a tainted soul.

Damien's eyes narrowed.

"Come here."

He held his arm out, and that thing was forced out of its body.

"Did you think you could hide?"

A soul so tainted in evil that it had turned crimson, the soul of Count Verex.

It was hidden inside a parasite that inhabited the Count's body. It was a safety mechanism that would allow him to escape even in the worst-case scenarios.

However, Damien would not let him leave so easily.

"Hmm..."

He looked at the soul struggling in his hands. It had the Count's image, which made its screaming and squealing a lot of fun to watch.

"Gehenna is trying to take you."

Gehenna only took the worst of the worst. Just what kind of crimes did he commit for such a place to want him?

"This man...was a God."

At one point, the Count was someone who ruled over several trillions of beings.

He was a being who stood near the peak of existence, the final level of power.

However, here he was.

He only had the chance to attack once, and even then, he wasn't even close to landing it.

'Is this what I've become...?'

Damien almost couldn't recognize himself anymore.

He thought back to what Thalia had asked back then.

And he remembered his answer.

He didn't become a monster for power.

He became a monster so that he could protect and avenge those he cared for. Power was just a medium.

'My path...'

Damien took a deep breath.

He didn't know why he was doubting himself. Maybe it was because of what the Crown of Realis showed him, or maybe it was the things he saw in the memories of those evil spirits he'd devoured in Gehenna.

Regardless, it was useless.

Other people wouldn't become peaceful because he wanted them to.

When the other side was willing to commit enough evil to dye his soul in blood, Damien needed to be willing to do the same.

Because if he wasn't, he would never be able to defeat them.

'As long as I keep my line and don't cross it, it doesn't matter how much of a monster I am.'

He'd learned this same lesson multiple times, but every single time he internalized it and kept it in his heart.



This time, he looked at the soul of a murderer, the soul of someone who'd taken away people he cared about and people his friends cared about.

And for his own benefit...

'Devour'

That soul entered his body, becoming a part of him.

The sins of that murderer became his own, and he accepted them willingly.

Damien glanced down at the world below.

It was massive. Far bigger than he expected it to be.

And as the Count's soul became part of his existence...

Something else entered Damien's body as well.

'A qualification.'

No, a deed.

It was a mark of ownership that gave him control over the Count's territory.

'I can...conquer this cosmos?'

No, he could dominate existence.

Damien's eyes shined.

'Domination.'

Another concept of Existence.

It had just now come to greet him.

Chapter 1490 Aftermath [1]

The battle seemed a little short, didn't it?

It really did.

With Existence supporting Damien, the Count was practically fated to die. There was nothing he could have done, and at every turn, nothing worked out for him.

His mana didn't listen to him, the atmosphere disallowed him from correcting his stance or balancing himself, and he was always open to Damien's attacks no matter what he did.

The battle was indeed short, because Count Verex was turned into a puppet who had no free will of his own.

But that didn't mean it was a quiet fight.

Damien did an insane amount of damage. It had to be remembered that the releasing of his aura alone razed tens of millions of kilometers of land to the ground.

Every time he struck the Count, massive gashes were made in the jungle's ecosystem.

Other than Thalia and her group, who watched on, the village, from which the surviving villagers were slowly starting to emerge, and Tiamat and Darius, who were just now returning from their battles, nothing was left untouched.

Half of the jungle was nonexistent at this point, while the other half was barely holding on.

When Damien threw Count Verex into the ground and formed that crater, the horrifying tremors in the earth managed to wake most of the Ancients who had been slumbering or hibernating while alerting the rest to danger.

But it wasn't over yet.

BOOM!

Damien took Count Verex into the sky.

The first impact razed the rest of the jungle. The air pressure was truly a weaponized wind that even endangered some of the Ancients.

The second, third, and fourth impacts only became even more ferocious.

The amount of force Damien was using had to be remembered.

His own physical force was enough to destroy planets without any supporting energy.

When he hit the Count, Damien used that physical force amplified thousands of times by the weight of Existence.

If he returned to the lower universe with that kind of power, entire galaxies or maybe even Sectors could've been destroyed in the same amount of strikes.

What would happen when that force exploded and sent its power in every direction?

The devastation spread far past the bounds of the sacred jungle and into the rest of the territory.

Earthquakes plagued the citizens, making many houses and buildings collapse.

The rushing winds that slammed their way through the lands picked up many a straggler and threw them into the sky. As for the infrastructural damage caused by the winds, it didn't even need to be mentioned.

Damien's attacks, while simple in the moment, were catastrophic to those not involved in the battle.

It truly was a battle of Gods.

No, it was more than that.

The destruction did happen.

Because of Damien's recklessness, the entire territory was almost destroyed. Countless lives were needlessly taken, an offense beyond offenses.

When Damien was finished absorbing Count Verex's existence, he looked down at the world and saw the result of his actions.

This was not the domination he desired.

He did have the desire for conquest.

He did want to rule over existence.

But he did not want to do so through fear.

Just as he did in the Sanctuary, he wanted the people to live as they pleased, free to choose any path whether that be rebellion, servitude, or anything else.

Damien did not want to kill for no reason. He didn't want to become like the people he despised, even if he made the decision to become a monster to fight against monsters.

At least for the innocent people who had no involvement in his path, he wanted to be something better than a monster.

'Fix this.'

He told the mist to take care of it.

Their souls were still present in this world, yet to ascend into the Wheel of Samsara.

The mist voiced its hesitation.

If it did as he told it to, the repercussions he'd have to face wouldn't be a joke at all.

If he wanted to rewrite the world like this...

"I don't care. Just do it."

The concept of domination.

Not only was it a concept related to the domination of all things within existence, but also a concept that allowed one to dominate Existence itself.

Since Damien gave the command with surety, the mist could not deny him.

The world began to change.

The damaged jungle regrew, and the bodies of those injured or killed in the aftermath were healed back to full health.

Their souls found their vessels soon after, and as if nothing had ever happened, the world was reverted to the way it was before the battle.

But their memories remained.

Damien said he wasn't going to take away their free will.

So he allowed them to remember what had occurred, so they could make their own decisions on how to view him.

Whether he was a savior or a monster...

'...it's not up to me.'

Damien took one last glance at the world below.

'Since the Count is dead, there aren't any other Gods in this territory. Tiamat and Darius can handle things for a while...'

Damien had a few plans in mind, which he used this moment to share with the two who had just returned to the village.

And with that, he disappeared from perception.

He'd once again acted against causality.

As such, he had to bear punishment.

But, unlike that time with the homunculus...

...this time, Damien truly would suffer.

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The events that had just occurred were truly a shock for any and everyone, including Tiamat and Darius.

They had been in the middle of their own battle when it happened.

Cairo died at Tiamat's hands, and when the sun finally set, giving Darius access to the Moon Flame, Caissa was also taken care of.

At the end of the day, her power of twisted darkness came from the emotions in her soul.

When Darius used the Moon Flame that was created to burn the ethereal and specifically target the soul, what more could she do to resist?

She was made quick work of, and as Tiamat and Darius prepared to rush back to the village, the entire jungle around them was blown to shreds.

They were fine, of course. Damien sensed them and gave them protective barriers as well before he started the fight.

However, neither of them had expected Damien's power to have grown so much.

They watched the battle in awe. As Demigods, they couldn't see it directly, but they could sense it vaguely and interpret what was going on.

It was a brutal battle, a true one-sided massacre as Damien intended it to be.

They watched as the Count was killed in the most visceral way, where even his soul was forced to eternally suffer.

They watched as the destroyed territory around them was brought back to normalcy, and they received Damien's message soon after.

It was something along the lines of, "Take care of the rest. I'll be gone for a while."

But they knew Damien better than most.

They knew that something like what they'd seen at the end was not something he should've been capable of.

Which meant...

Tiamat sighed, while Darius gritted his teeth.

Damien didn't know it, but just as he watched others and noticed the small things, others watched him and did the same.

It was things like this.

It was the moment when he decided to take on punishment from the heavens themselves to right his wrongs when people looked at him and felt the kind of reverence and loyalty they usually felt.



It was because of moments like this that his people never viewed him as a monster.

And so, as Damien silently sacrificed himself to save those trillions of people who were affected by the battle, they swiftly made their way back to the village.

They would accomplish the tasks he'd assigned them.

Because he was a man worthy of their loyalty and respect.