

## Void 151

### Chapter 151 - Rank Up [1]

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Thunderous footsteps and a fierce cacophony of roars shook the walls of the fortress as countless beasts charged out of the forest. Beasts of all types charged without discrimination, intense bloodlust leaking from their bodies.

The eyes of these beasts contained a maddening light, some even showing a hint of unwillingness that would go unnoticed by everyone present. Still, they charged without care.

They stampeded over each other, even killing fellow beasts in the process. Some even turned outright and began devouring their brethren as they charged the thick metal walls they were approaching.

The scene was truly chaotic.

From the top of the fortress walls, two women watched this scene play out.

“Do you think we can work safely within a tide like that?” The blue-haired woman asked.

“It’s no problem. My illusions should be perfect for this kind of situation.” A pink-haired woman responded.

After they entered Jia City, the girls were almost immediately thrust into action. Barely anyone paid attention to them, simply pointing them towards the location they should be situated and leaving them be.

And only an hour or two later, another beast tide approached.

The process of events was rapid to the point where Rose wasn't able to examine the black strings she saw on the cultivators, and Elena was also forced to suppress the nagging feeling in her heart.

As the tide appeared closer to the city, a booming voice rang out, attracting the attention of every able fighter in the vicinity. "Alright! No time for talk! Everyone charge!"

A wave of elemental attacks flew into the coming tide, with many cultivators equipped with a variety of weapons following close after. Among these were Rose and Elena.

However, unlike the others, they didn't attack head-on. At speeds faster than sound, they arrived in the middle of the beast tide before descending rapidly.

Boom!

The impact of their descent crushed a few beasts below them and forced the others to scatter. But Rose wouldn't allow them to get away.

"Illusory Throne."

The world became grey and a massive dome trapped all beasts within a 100-meter radius within it. However, the beasts were none the wiser. Even the cultivators outside had no idea this was happening.

“Go wild. I should be able to hold this domain for many hours without rest.” Rose said, encouraging Elena.

Elena gave her a deep look before charging into the crowd. Her body became a streak of light and in the next second, howls of pain could be heard from the beasts.

Shiiing!

The sound of a blade being drawn resounded through the domain and following it, ten beasts were immediately bisected.

Without hesitation, Elena moved to her next target. Taking one hand off of her katana, she waved it towards her back, causing golden-white ropes of light to bind a beast that was charging her.

But she ignored it, continuing her forward charge. Behind her, those ropes tightened around the beast, the light it was created from burning through its body until it was eventually diced into mincemeat.

A group of 10 more beasts suddenly pounced at her from every direction, while a flying beast dove down to ambush her. Facing this barrage, Elena stayed calm. Luckily enough, all the beasts she had fought so far were at 2nd class, allowing her to blaze through them.

“Yggdrasil.”

Hundreds of thick tree roots exited the ground and surrounded her in a protective field, growing into a towering tree. The tree reached half a kilometer in height, which would have been a sight to behold if anyone else on the battlefield could see it.

The attacks of those beasts landed on the trunk of the tree, causing only light scratches, and that flying beast was skewered by the tree as it formed.

Once the trunk had branched out, Elena’s voice resounded once more. Her words fell onto the ears of even those rampaging beasts, causing them to look in her direction. Her voice was like a melody that attracted them to its source.

“Call of Life.”

Every beast within Rose’s domain found a new target within the massive tree. Previously, they were attacking randomly, some not even having opponents. However now, they had a unified cause.

Find whatever was in the center of that tree.

It was truly a sight to behold. The sky was almost blotted out with the number of aerial beasts, the ground was a sea of darkness cast by the shadows of those running. And at the center of it all, a beautiful tree emanating a wondrous aura of life.

As the battle continued without pause, Rose had been slightly increasing the size of her barrier, trapping more beasts. Like this, the number only increased instead of decreasing, providing Elena with a steady source of experience.

As for the danger that would come if Elena ran out of mana? There was none. Everything happening was within Rose's palm, and all the beasts so far were weak enough to be crushed by a single move from her.

In earth terms, she had built an Exp farm for Elena's convenience. As for her, she simply sat back on the illusory throne that only she could see and watched the events in amusement.

On Elena's side, the sea of beasts had finally reached her tree. The branches extended, becoming akin to massive whips that maneuvered through the crowd below her and bisected everything in their path. As for the aerial beasts...

"Judgement."

A familiar skill was cast as a beam of light left Elena's body and shot into the sky. It transformed into tens of swords, showcasing her progress after her first fight with Rose, and charged into the crowd of beasts flying towards her.

"SKREE!"

Screeches of pain rang out, but they were drowned by the cacophony forming below. The swords of light in the sky continued unhindered, slicing many birds and winged reptiles into shreds. And on the ground, those beasts were being crushed into meat paste.

It was a symphony of death, with blood spilling wantonly and assorted body parts flying through the air. Oddly enough, though, not a single drop landed on Elena.

Well, that part could be considered a small gift from Rose.

Slowly but surely, the sounds of roaring and stampedes died down, leaving only a single tree standing within the grey world.

The ground was painted red, the massive tree was green, and the sky itself was grey. It was truly a beautiful contrast. However, the silence was quickly interrupted.

“Grrrr”

A low growl could be heard within the domain as a single beast walked forward proudly. It was a massive lion with two pristine wings on its back. Its mane was billowing even without a breeze as if it was blessed by the wind.

“Human, I cannot say I do not understand the reason for your actions, but you do not understand ours either. Regardless of wrong or right, you must die today.” A deep and hollow voice left the mouth of the lion. Its aura was released wildly, clearly outlining its strength.

It was a mid-level 3rd class beast, perhaps even higher level than Rose.

Chapter 152 - Rank Up [2]

Elena glared at the beast with apprehension, unsure if she could take it on. She was able to fight Rose successfully during their spar, but neither of them were aiming to kill that time.

This time, her opponent was leaking bloodlust greater than any she had ever faced, assuring her that losing meant death.

However, even with the presence and aura of a beast seemingly in the Core Expansion realm, the grey world around them didn't break.

'If that's the case, then Rose should have the situation under control.'

And just as she thought, a voice suddenly rang in her head.

"How far are you from your class change?"

Checking her status, Elena smiled. "Not even 1000 exp. This kill should be more than enough."

From her position on her throne, Rose slightly nodded. With such a small amount of experience left, Elena only needed to land the fatal blow on the beast to level up.

"I'll take this one. When you see an opportunity, go for the kill."

Although she was slightly hesitant, Elena relented. Her main goal at the moment was just that, a rank up. The grey world made her forget, but the beast tide was still raging around them. After leveling up, she'd be able to fight stronger beasts as she pleased.

The massive tree Elena was standing on slowly receded back into the ground, its vines and roots untangling. The swords of light around her turned into particles before merging with the surroundings.

As for Elena herself, she jumped back and made a good amount of distance from the opposing beast.

“Hmm?” The lion was confused by her actions, but didn’t think much of it. Making distance was a normal move, especially in combat with a much stronger opponent.

However, he immediately became wary when the air in front of him coalesced into another figure who radiated an aura that was only slightly weaker than his own.

“Isn’t it a little rude to pick on someone weaker than you? How about you get past me first.”

Rose didn’t speak anymore before initiating combat. She raised her hand, causing tens of bladed weapons to shoot up from the ground under the lion.

Whoosh!

The lion took to the air, narrowly dodging before opening its mouth and letting out a thunderous roar.

Light green mana raged in the atmosphere before turning into multiple tornadoes that charged towards Rose.

“A wind affinity? Just like me.” She said as she formed her own tornadoes to match.



The two sets of wind element attacks met and diffused each other, causing the ground beneath them to shred into dust particles.

While the lion prepped for another attack, it suddenly felt pain in its side. “Huh?” It uttered before realizing that one of its wings had been severed.

“H-how?!”

He hadn’t felt any movement of mana nor any threat before it happened, only realizing it after the action had already taken place.

Before he could think further, he felt the same pain on the adjacent side as his other wing fell to the ground.

“I guess you thought highly of yourself before coming here. Well, I’m a kind person so let me explain. You are in my domain. My word is law. Simple, right?”

From the start, there was no competition. Any being even close to Rose in strength was completely subject to her will within her illusory throne domain. It was the reason why the concept of domains was largely feared.

Unless one had their own domain to fight it, it was nigh impossible to win if the strength of both sides was even.

“Y-you!” The lion stuttered as fear began to overrun him. However, regardless of how he tried to flee, he found himself unable to move.

“Elena, the rest is up to you.” With those words, Rose once again vanished.

Elena watched the scene in awe, realizing how vast the gap between them was. It wasn’t raw power, rather it was a difference in comprehension.

Shaking her head, she rid herself of stray thoughts. Still, she felt a bit competitive.

“Purify.”

Mana gushed out of her body in droves, becoming a wave of light that crashed through the surroundings, illuminating the grey world.

The golden-white sea continued unimpeded before crashing into the lion and swallowing it whole.

The light attribute mana seeped into the lion’s body, infecting his being with its color. Slowly but surely, he was purified into the most prime form of essence. He wasn’t even able to release a sound as he died.

As she watched this scene, Elena saw a series of holographic screens cloud her vision.

[Your achievements have reached the required threshold to change your class. Choose a new class from the list below.]

[Choose a class]

[1. Sword Saint]

[2. Prime Saintess]

[3. Valkyrie]

[4. Nymph]

Elena took her attention away from the receding sea of light and contemplated her options. The first two were immediately ruled out, as she had no interest in following either path. As for which of the last two to choose, she had to think further.

Valkyries were geared towards war, and in the legends, they dominated battlefields and led deceased souls to the afterlife.

As for Nymphs, they were something akin to the embodiment of nature. Although she was sure this path would grant her immense power, it wasn't one geared towards fighting, which was her strong suit.

Making her decision, she picked her class.

[You have become a Valkyrie. Valkyries are warriors who paint battlefields red with the blood of their enemies. Though you walk a path of bloodshed, you strive to remain pure of heart.]

[The souls of the deceased recognize your intentions, calling out to you. Your existence becomes closer to death, increasing your battle prowess. Your legends have been enhanced.]

[By becoming a 3rd class being, you have obtained the qualifications to choose a subclass.]

[Choose a subclass]

[1. Saintess]

[2. Enchantress]

[3. Alchemist]

[4. Blacksmith]

[5. Beast Tamer]

Subclasses were an odd concept as they didn't seem to aid much considering the power of main classes, but they did help keep and enhance some abilities that might be discarded with the change of class.

Due to this, she chose Saintess. Her healing capability was something she deemed necessary, especially if anything untoward happens to Damien or Rose.

While she basked in the information that entered her mind and the elevation of her league, Elena opened her status.

‘Status’

[Status]

[Elena Pierce]

Human

Female – Age 21

Level 100 – [Valkyrie]

Experience value: 0/150,000

Title(s): [N/A]

Affinities: Light, Life

Physique: None

Magic Power: 14000

STR: 300

AGI: 315

DEF: 290

INT: 300

DEX: 320

Skills: [High-Level Recovery Level 2], [Holy Magic Level Max], [Life Magic Level Max], [Mid-Level Regeneration Level 8], [Sword Mastery Level 7], [Judgement Level Max], [Call of Life Level 7], [Souls of Valhalla Level 1]

Elena smiled wholeheartedly. She had finally reached 3rd class, becoming an existence on the same level as Damien and Rose. Perhaps their levels were ahead of hers at the moment, but as long as she tried, it wouldn't be hard to catch up.

Looking to her left, she noticed a figure appearing from the air.

“Congratulations!” Rose said cheerfully. She was also genuinely excited for Elena’s progress.

However, Elena merely smiled as she looked at the scene outside of the grey world for the first time. The battle between humans and beasts was becoming more and more ferocious as time passed.

“Mm, this is definitely something to celebrate, but we can do that later. For now, I’m itching to test my new power.”

Chapter 153 - Devil Worshipers [1]

2 days passed in a flash for the outside forces staying in Dalia City and the sun slowly rose once more to signify the day of the raid.

Currently, Damien and Long Chen stood in the midst of a crowd of cultivators as they waited at the South Gate of the city.

Their wait didn’t last long, however, as a massive flying beast landed at the front of their ranks. On its back stood the valiant figure of Shen Li draped in his usual beast hide cloak.

“The time of our raid starts now. When we reach the destination, question nothing and leave none alive. This is our only mission.”

He had already given his extended speech two days ago, so there was nothing left to say. With these final words, his flying beast took off into the distance, followed by the crowd of cultivators.

The journey wasn't long at all, taking only a day to carry out, and throughout the whole thing, no nervousness could be felt. It was almost like they weren't going into a battle where many of them would die.

Instead, the atmosphere was filled with greed. The extinction of a sect didn't simply end there, instead, it was a gateway to more wealth. Usually, this wealth would be claimed by the ruling power in the area, but since they were directly participating, they might have a chance to squander some of it.

When Shen Li's beast came to a stop, it hovered over a large canyon in the midst of the snow-covered land. The direct contrast of abyssal black and pure white was truly a sight to see.

Within that canyon stood a small city that was painted in a red aura. It was similar to any other city in the Northern Continent when it came to architecture. Well, that was only if one didn't factor in the massive bloody mansion in its center.

Usually, the aura around the city would contain a clear and visceral scent of blood, as it was created by refining the blood of many beings, however, such a smell was faded.

The air still reeked, but of something much more putrid. As Damien descended into the canyon with the rest of the cultivators on the raid, he was immediately able to identify this smell.

'It's them again.'



Before even leaving earth with the elders of the Burning Sun Sect, he was aware that the threat of the Nox was also looming over the Cloud Plane. And though he wasn't surprised seeing something related to them, he was still taken back by how obvious it was.

It was as if they were making no attempts to hide their desire for conquest, blatantly provoking the people on the planet who knew of them. Still, Damien found it strange that in such a situation, talk about war wasn't more prominent.

And it wasn't even just that. The Beguiled Devil Sect itself was acting strange, as even with their obvious and unbidden descent into their territory, they didn't make a move.

‘Something’s not right.’

His intuition was screaming at him about the discontinuity between the currently calm atmosphere and the situation that should be taking place.

And he wasn't one to ignore his intuition.

Zara also understood his intentions, quickly pulling forward and staying at the front of the crowd, and Long Chen also followed.

Although he wasn't aware of Damien's reasoning, he had learned through their various spars that Damien wasn't someone to make stupid moves for no reason.

And quickly, his choice was proven right. Assorted yells started ringing out from the back of the crowd, and a loud shout shifted the entire mood of the group.

“Charge as fast as you can! Those who stay in the air will die!”

Shen Li sped up, leaving the group behind and bypassing the red aura that surrounded the sect. Damien and Long Chen followed without thought as behind them, the screams became more jarring.

The red aura that covered the sect speedily approached the crowd of cultivators and entrapped them within. The red aura turned into a fog before entering the bodies of those it entrapped.

Any aura emitting from them was removed as their cultivation was seemingly sealed. But even with this, they remained suspended in the air.

Slowly, the fog that entered their bodies ate away at them from the inside, acting as a black hole that consumed all of their blood.

Those cultivators quickly became lifeless and mummified husks, dropping to the ground and crumbling into dust.

They had all died.

But Damien didn't have time to focus on that at the moment. As one of the few that made it through before the aura began its attack, he was able to witness the scene within the sect.

Bloodstains painted the walls of the many buildings in the small city and assorted body parts littered the ground. However, even these weren't intact. The body parts had clearly been corroded, and traces of a black ink-like substance could be seen on many of them.

Hundreds of cultivators slowly showed up, seemingly having passed through without being harmed by the aura, but their original number in the thousands had been drastically cut down.

“What the hell happened here?” One of them wondered out loud.

In the midst of the chilling silence that had come over the group, the man’s voice was particularly loud, but nobody answered his question.

In fact, they were all wondering the same thing.

Their goal today was to exterminate a wicked sect, but it had already been done before they arrived.

But that didn’t mean they could rejoice. From the pungent smell in the air, it was clear that the massacre that took place was extremely recent. Perhaps the one who committed it was still within the sect.

As Damien observed the surroundings, his eyes slightly flashed and a black mana entered his vision. If he had to describe it in one word, it would be death.

But it wasn’t an aura or threat of death, it was mana that emanated the feeling of death itself. As he traced its source, Damien found himself staring directly at the center of the city.

The sound of low footsteps began ringing through the air before one pair became many, sounding more like a march of troops.

And slowly revealing themselves from within the blood-red mansion in the middle of the city was a group of humanoid beings.

They weren't necessarily Nox, as compared to the one Damien met in the temple their stature simply didn't match up, but they definitely weren't human.

Their skin was the color of midnight, and a slimy black substance dripped off of them with every movement.

The whites of their eyes were blue while their pupils were the same black as their skin. Many of them had mutations as well, ranging from extra limbs to demonic horns protruding from their bodies.

Hundreds of these strange beings soon emerged from the mansion.

At the forefront, there was a large man whose stature didn't lose out to Shen Li's in the slightest. He had cracked glasses on his face and long firey red hair that reached his waist.

Looking up at the crowd of cultivators in the sky, a large grin formed on his face.

“Well, well. It seems that the heavens have graced us with even more sustenance.”

Chapter 154 - Devil Worshipers [2]

The man's voice was just as disconcerting as the rest of his appearance. If it had to be described, it was a mixture of nails scraping against a chalkboard and blatant pervertedness mixed into a single sound.

It was disgusting to hear.

"Who are you." Shen Li asked with a grim face. Regardless of whether these people slaughtered the Beguiled Devil Sect or not, they didn't seem to be friendly.

"Us? We are nothing special. Simply lowly beings who desire to spread word of our gods, nothing more." The large man responded. "As for me, you can call me Du Feng."

With the man's introduction, it became impossible to classify him as someone who invaded from another world. Besides the grotesque look he had, he resembled a person from the Northern Continent to the tee.

Shen Li's eyes narrowed as he thought of something. "You must be one of those damn Devil Worshippers I've been hearing so much about. From what I know, your sect is also a wicked power. For what reason do you move against others on your side?"

"On our side?" Du Feng laughed in ridicule, "our side is only those who are the same as us. The rest of you shall either submit to our gods or die a fool's death."

The crowd of 500 Devil Worshippers behind him released their auras, indicating that every single one of them was at Core Formation realm or above. As for Du Feng himself, he was at the peak of 3rd class.

“There is no more need for words. If you wish to talk more, you shall become one of us.” Raising himself into the air, Du Feng shot at Shen Li like a speeding bullet.

Along with this, the rest of the cultivators also erupted with battle intent. Even in this unexpected situation, they knew they no longer had the option to flee.

The crimson fog stood behind them like a beast with its maw gaping and the battle in front of them seemed inevitable. If they let fear overcome them, they were bound to die.

Damien looked at Long Chen and gave a slight nod before hopping off Zara’s back and charging at the approaching Devil Worshipers.

Boom-!

He immediately drew his sword, slamming it into the ground as he dropped. A huge shockwave erupted with him at its epicenter, catching many of the Devil Worshipers off guard.

The other cultivators present weren’t dumb at all, taking advantage of the slight distraction to make their moves. With that, a fierce battle began.

With every being here at 3rd class, Damien couldn’t slice through them effortlessly, but he could definitely take a couple of them at a time.

His sword became covered in crackling destructive lighting before vibrating fast enough to produce smoke. The lightning heated up and combined with the vibrating molecules to create a beam of plasma that coated Damien’s sword.

Vanishing from his position, he appeared behind one of the Devil Worshipers closest to him and sliced his sword down.

“AGH!” The man let out a groan of pain noticing a deep gash on his arm but recovered quickly.  
“Haaa!” With a loud battle cry, he charged at Damien.

His nails elongated into small blades and slashed towards Damien’s side, but were quickly parried by his sword. Even for a normal cultivator, the plasma sword would be hard to take barehanded. Not to mention someone with Nox traits.

Noticing his finger blades melting, the man took his arm away quickly before circling around Damien, looking for an opening to strike.

Noticing that the man was having trouble, 3 other Devil Worshipers came and surrounded Damien.

However, this only caused him to grin. “Gravity Lock.”

The space around the 5 people solidified and formed a thick cage that none could bypass. When they tried, they felt their bodies being weighed down and borderline crushed by the pressure.

By the time they realized they couldn’t escape, the Grim Reaper’s chilling voice entered their ears.  
“Now that we’re all here, how about we fight for real?”

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Boom! Boom!

A few meters away, another fierce battle had erupted. 5 Devil Worshipers surrounded a single black-haired man but even with their combined might they couldn't do much harm to him.

The black slimy substance leaking from their pores was weaponized, becoming sharp projectiles that bombarded their opponent.

The shards were covered in that black mana that clouded the environment, and any time they made contact, they tried to corrode their target from the inside.

Many of the cultivators that were fighting the devil worshippers had already severed their own limbs to stop the spread of corruption.

‘Nine Dragons soar through the heavens’

Pristine white mana coalesced below the feet of those devil worshippers and swept them away, consuming them whole. However, Long Chen found himself facing another barrage of attacks.

‘Heavenly Cloud Steps’

He maneuvered through the crowds and used his refined sword skills to damage his enemies on his way. Whenever he saw an opportunity, he immediately went for the kill.



As he moved through the massive battle, he noticed a particular area that was mostly devoid of devil worshippers. The ones around that space seemed to fear it, trying their best not to be trapped within.

“Hahaha! Come on, you idiots! Is that all you got?” Roaring laughter thundered through the surroundings. Accompanying it, 5 mangled and lifeless bodies of devil worshippers exited that space from before.

Long Chen was well aware of who this voice belonged to, and it caused him to smile. He rushed in that direction, ignoring the apprehension of everyone else.

“Damien, I have yet to see what it’s like when we fight together. How about we find out now?”

“Hmm?” The shimmering space slowly dissolved to show Damien’s amused face and a ground littered with corpses.

“Fighting together, huh. Alright! Sounds fun.”

Damien stood side by side with Long Chen and gazed upon the ongoing battle. Blood was wantonly spraying in the air as well as a black substance that imitated it.

Cultivators and devil worshippers were falling lifelessly in every direction, and unbeknownst to anyone, something strange was happening with their blood.

Those corpses that littered the ground slowly became husks as their blood was drained. For someone like Damien who could see the movement of mana as colors, he knew exactly where it was going.

In the air, two massive men stood facing each other. Even with the massive battle going on underneath them, they had hardly moved.

Yet, their clash had already begun. Their auras spread through the air wildly, meeting in the middle and causing visible sparks to form.

On one side, Shen Li was slowly releasing his own aura, seemingly much more powerful than anyone could have guessed. It was to the point where Du Feng's earlier show of power seemed like a joke.

But there were thin lines of blood that snaked through the air and entered his body in a concealed manner. Every time this blood came into contact with him, his aura and power were given a slight boost.

Looking at these two men, Damien realized something. 'He was a member of the Beguiled Devil Sect.'

In fact, most of these devil worshippers were most likely the same. The extinction of the sect wasn't done by some outside force, but from within their ranks.

Still, Damien didn't feel the need to think about it right now. Grinning at Long Chen, he made a proposal.

"Whoever gets the least kills had to call the winner 'Boss' for an entire month. Deal?"

Long Chen's eyes flashed as his fighting spirit blazed. A wide grin slowly formed on his face. "Deal."

And with that, an unstoppable force was created on the battlefield.

Chapter 155 - Devil Worshipers [3]

The battlefield on the north side of the canyon was enveloped in a whirlwind of destruction.

Pillars of light burst forth from the ground, dragons made entirely of mana wreaked havoc among the devil worshippers, space distorted and swallowed those who couldn't avoid its grasp, and arcs of lightning incinerated those who were left behind.

In the middle of it all, Damien and Long Chen stood only a few meters apart, circling each other and attacking relentlessly without interfering with each other's momentum.

From the way they were fighting together, it would seem as if they had been doing so for years. Not one person would guess that this level of synergy was born from only a handful of spars against each other.

Seeing how terrifying their prowess was, many more devil worshippers ran towards them to help their suffering comrades out of such a perilous situation, but to no avail.

Any attack they threw would start rapidly losing speed when it entered a 10-meter radius of the duo and those that somehow made it passed that barrier were returned to their senders with even more force than they originally had.

Slowly but surely, the number of 500 or so devil worshippers was cut down to a little over 300, with most of the work being the contribution of Damien and Long Chen.

Noticing that they were on the final stretch, the duo looked at each other and grinned. Damien expanded his vector field to keep out any interference before inhaling mana into his throat.

As for Long Chen, he thrust his sword into the ground, causing a golden dragon larger than any other he had produced thus far to appear.

The duo stood back to back, and without another second of delay, released massive beams of dragon's breath using their own methods.

They directed their attacks in half circles, causing the entire 360° radius around them to be filled with beams of scorching light. One was bitch black while the other was gold, but they worked in tandem to destroy a common foe.

The number of devil worshippers who survived the massive attack was even less than before, making it much easier for the other cultivators who had joined the raid to kill their enemies.

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In the air above the raging battlefield, the two leaders stood opposite each other, watching the scene with indifference painting their expressions.

“Your people are dying. Do you not plan to help them?” Shen Li inquired.

“If their deaths can further our cause, they should die happily. Otherwise, they are useless.” Du Feng responded.

Shen Li glared at this opponent that he couldn’t read whatsoever, but soon gave up on having any sort of peaceful interaction.

“How about we take our battle out of this canyon. Its destruction doesn’t mean anything good for either of us.” Shen Li proposed.

Du Feng thought for a second before nodding. He didn’t desire the needless sacrifice of his people, as they still had more use.

The two leaders flew out of the canyon, uninhibited by the bloody fog that killed so many cultivators on their way in. Shortly after, massive earthquakes shook the entire region of the Northern Continent.

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It didn’t take more than 2 hours after Damien and Long Chen’s combined assault began for the raid group to completely wipe out the devil worshippers they were facing.

The bottom of the canyon was filled with black blood and slime from the lifeless corpses that littered the ground. Even the corpses of the cultivators had been corroded and corrupted by the liquids.

As a light silence and an aura of relief swept the crowd, they finally felt the massive rumbles of the earth that had been drowned out by their own battle.

Peering up at the sky above, they were able to notice bright flashes of light and dispersing mana, clear signs that another intense fight was taking place.

As Damien tried to understand the course of the battle on the surface, Zara approached him from behind and stood next to him. She had also been fighting on her own throughout this battle, consuming her enemies to enhance her strength.

“Damien, something feels weird about those people.” She transmitted into his head. She didn’t want to talk in front of such a large crowd, especially about things they didn’t need to hear.

It could be said that Zara was maturing on her own while Damien continued to blaze his path forward. Even if she was still plenty innocent, it wasn’t near as much as before.

Damien ran his hand through her silky fur as he urged her to continue. “What kind of weird?”

“They felt familiar somehow,” she answered, “like I’ve met them before somewhere.”

“Hmm,” Damien pondered. “Maybe it’s because of the Nox we met in Apeiron. Well, we can think about it deeply later and figure it out.”

Zara nodded lightly before returning back to his shadow. Inwardly, she was genuinely happy that he didn’t discard the weird feeling she was having as some one-time occurrence.

Turning to Long Chen, a slight grin formed on Damien’s face. “How many?”

“Including the dragon’s breath, my total is 112. And you?”

Damien’s grin widened even more. “123.”

Long Chen’s face soured quickly hearing the number, and even after checking with Little Flame, who had been watching the entire fight, he couldn’t find any discrepancies.

“Damn it.” He cursed. The mischievous grin on Damien’s face didn’t help his situation one bit.

“Anyway, should we head up and see what’s going on up there?” Long Chen mentioned, trying to change the subject.

But Damien wouldn’t let him off so easily. “Hm? I feel like you just said something but for some reason, I didn’t hear it. Mind repeating yourself?”

Long Chen’s face began to burn in shame. Not once had he, the scion of the Long clan, been forced into a situation like this.

“Should we go check on the situation on the surface, B-b-boss.” He finally said through clenched teeth, stumbling a bit to get the words out of his mouth.

“Hahahaha!” Damien roared with laughter. “That’s right, I’m your boss now!”

When he noticed the strange looks they were getting from the other cultivators in the room, his laughter only became more rambunctious.

Putting his arm around Long Chen's shoulder, he raised his voice so the others could hear him.

“Everyone! This right here is the scion of the Long clan in the Central Continent, Long Chen! And as of today, I, Damien Void, am his boss! Hahahaha!”

Long Chen wanted to push Damien away, but at this point, anything he did would be used against him.

He glared hatefully at Damien while vowing that one day he would repay this grievance. Not just in kind, but tenfold. He even began brainstorming the different punishments he could have Damien do.

While they were joking around, the rest of the raid force also generally recuperated enough to leave their area. Not to mention, the rumbling and quaking of the earth around them had only become more pronounced as time passed.

Those who had beasts mounted them while the rest flew to the skies with their own power. Just like with their leader, the bloody fog didn't impede their ascent.

The most likely scenario was that it had to be activated manually.

And as the group finally reached the precipice of the canyon, their eyes became focused on a scene of devastation.



## Chapter 156 - Coincidence? [3]

On the northern coast of the central continent, there was a fortress bordering a large forest. For the past week, this fortress had been drowned in the sounds of roars and thunderous battle, but as of this moment, it had all died down.

However, the end of the beast tide which would usually bring joy and celebration didn't do so. Instead, there was only stifling silence.

The eyes of the cultivators present, which would usually be greedily eyeing the countless beast corpses littering the ground, were all glued on a single woman.

Her shoulder-length blue hair flowed in the wind and her eyes had a sharpness that made it so nobody dared to approach her. However, this wasn't the only reason.

Surrounding the woman were 8 figures draped in majestic white armor that radiated holiness, yet the eyes of these figures were hollow, filled with a burning white flame that showcased their intelligence.

The armored figures were all in pairs.

Two with massive swords over 3 meters long, two with bows taller than the average human and shining quivers of arrows, two with heavy spears whose weight alone caused the earth to crack, and two whose figures were lean and carried short daggers that didn't lose out in majesty to the others.

The sword and spear-wielding figures were mounted atop armored steeds that looked like a mix between horses and birds while the other 4 were standing on their own feet.

However, the most glaring fact was that each of these figures who were radiating the aura of a peak Core Formation realm expert were now kneeling in front of that very same blue-haired woman.

Usually, a group of Core Formation realm experts such as this was not a sight to behold, and anyone would assume that the woman in question simply had a powerful background. But the cultivators present knew the truth.

Halfway through the final wave, this woman suddenly appeared in the middle of the beast tide and called out three words that radiated power.

“Souls of Valhalla.”

The area around her was painted in pristine white light as an ancient formation etched itself onto the ground. In the next instant, these 8 figures appeared.

After that, it was a bloodbath. The massive weapons of the armored figures wreaked havoc upon the beasts, causing massive explosions and damage that was reminiscent of a minefield.

They swept the battlefield with unprecedented synergy, moving without care for their lives. Whenever they were injured, they were bathed in green mana with a heavy life aura until they regained their peak state.

And even while they were being healed, they continued to fight. The white flames that lit up their empty eye sockets burned brighter with every kill, reveling in the feeling of battle.

The force of these 8 Core Formation experts was greater than that of the rest of the cultivators combined, and it was all due to that blue-haired girl they had seen.

She stood in the rear, seemingly in awe at her own abilities, as she watched her summons blaze through her enemies. And the tide itself ended only hours after their descent.

Currently, Elena was observing the beings she called forth with her new skill. Their existence was contradictory, radiating an aura of both holiness and death, but their power was even greater than her own.

When Elena chose to become a Valkyrie, she expected the class to be an upgrade of her 2nd class. She didn't expect that she'd legitimately gain a connection to the place called Valhalla.

And she could tell that she truly did. These beings were, as the skill proclaimed, the souls of Valhalla. They were warriors of the past who lived and died on the battlefield. And now, they had become her personal army.

She could only summon 8 of them at the moment, but she could firmly feel the connection she had with an unknown Plane of existence.

It was a connection through which she felt she could call upon many more warriors, perhaps even building her own legion once she was strong enough to do so.

In the distance, Rose and Día, who had reappeared now that the combat had ended, were also watching in shock. Rose had been fully expecting Elena to receive massive boosts after her class change, but this simply felt too exaggerated.

With that kind of combat power, she couldn't be sure if even she would win in a fight. And that was if she was going all out with her illusions. In a pure upfront confrontation? Rose was assured of her loss.

But this wasn't discouraging for her. The threat she felt from Elena drove her competitive spirit and gave her a new drive to improve. Her rival surpassing her simply wasn't something she would allow.

As for Día, she could barely fathom the two monsters she had been tasked to protect. With this kind of prowess, was she even needed? It had to be known that the two of them were still concealed by Rose's illusions to the point where not even the strongest beings on the premises could sense them.

'I have to tell the Sect Master about these two asap.' She thought to herself. With the secret realm opening and massive changes on the horizon, two monstrous talents like them were imperative to the sect. Her only regret was that they had only recently joined.

If their growth had been fostered since the beginning...Dia could only imagine the results. However, it was unknown what she would think when she realized that both of them had only been truly gaining power for less than a decade.

As the crowd watched on, Elena's summons turned into streaks of white light before charging into her body. Two wing-shaped tattoos formed on each of her arms and two twisting serpents snaked up the sides of her neck.

Elena's ocean blue eyes became tainted with a hint of black, but it was barely noticeable if one didn't examine her thoroughly.

Sighing lightly, Elena raised her gaze to look at the crowd watching her. Like clockwork, they immediately turned away from her and continued with their post-battle arrangements.

At the back of the crowd, a man watched all of this happen with a profound look on his face. When the spectacle ended, he turned and walked away, every cultivator making way when they noticed his identity.

When he came to this fortress, he had never expected to see such an interesting scene. In fact, he was currently patting himself on the back for making such a wise decision.

The man held an imperceptible smile on his face as he thought back to the beast tide that had finally ended after many days of fighting. 'Everything is going according to plan. Still, I should tell father about those two girls.'

The man soon mounted a lavishly adorned flying beast and left the premises of the fortress.

If Rose had been present to see this man, she would immediately feel something off about him.

After all, his body was coated in a thick yet invisible layer of a familiar black mana oozing with the scent of death.

Chapter 157 - Mission End [1]

In one portion of the mountainous region that encompassed the entirety of the central region of the Northern Continent, there was a large canyon that used to be surrounded by a snow-covered desert.

The snow itself was many feet deep, considering the weather patterns of the central continent, but the ground had also been compacted and contained a firmness to it after being tempered by such an atmosphere.

However, the beautiful white tundra was no more. In its place was a barren wasteland.

A 3000-kilometer area surrounding the canyon was free of snow, with only the small rivers of water formed by its melting left in its place. The water flowed towards the canyon and pooled within, causing a small waterfall to form.

As for the ground itself, it was in even worse condition. After the many feet of snow had melted and most of the water formed from it had evaporated, the ground was cracked and sundered until even its firmness could no longer save it.

There were hundreds of craters littering its surface, looking like a meteor shower had just impacted it. Not to mention the portions of rock that were melted into magma or covered in a thick red liquid reminiscent of blood.

In the center of the apocalyptic scene was a sight that looked like it should have been immortalized in a painting.

A large man with black hair and fierce blue eyes stood with his foot on another equally large man's chest.

His clothes were ripped and torn, with the beast skin cloak that used to cover his body being a mere cape on his back. Trails of blood ran down his face and dried blood caked his bulging muscles.

As for the man below him, he could barely be called a man anymore. His face was caved in with his skull evidently being broken, his arms were a mixture of red blood and black slush, and his chest had a gaping hole in it that was filled by the other man's foot.

Any signs of life within him had long been extinguished.

This was the sight Damien and those cultivators saw when they exited the canyon. Due to the bloody fog, they had failed to notice the waterfall that had formed, but the obvious rumbling was enough to cue them in on the situation.

When Shen Li felt the multiple gazes that had locked onto his position, he looked up at the cultivators, the fire in his eyes slightly dimming. Without a single word, Shen Li jumped onto the back of his flying beast and made his way back to Dalia City.

And the cultivators soon followed.

They didn't need to be told what had happened and no instructions on how to proceed were needed.

The trip back was much more silent than the previous one. Not only had they just fought a perilous battle, but many of them had also lost people in its duration.

In the back of the crowd, Damien and Long Chen were also silent. Although they were fine, they could read the room well enough to keep their mouths shut.

However, Damien's thoughts were still as active as ever. 'The Nox invasion in this world is either going much more smoothly than anyone assumed or they are just pretending to be blind.'

To be honest, he hoped it was the former option. The latter suggested treachery in the highest levels of society, which would not bode well for him.

He was already thoroughly invested in the situation with the Nox since it didn't seem like they were intent on leaving the universe alone. He would be roped in at some point, he just felt like being proactive was better.

This way, at least he chose to enter this war.

'Either way, I need to let Master know about what happened here. With his strength and status, he'll probably know what to do.'

It might have been odd for Damien to trust his master without knowing him much, but it was how things ended up.

His master had helped him plenty even in the short time they had known each other, and even while knowing Damien was an otherworlder, he didn't make any trouble.

It wasn't a level of trust that would allow him to reveal all his secrets, but it was enough for this. Especially since his master was a true resident of this world.

At the end of the day, Damien had no real connection to the Cloud Plane. He might have sympathy for its destruction or the tragedies that might take place, but only the amount a normal outsider would have.

It'd be more accurate to call it the shock of watching a society collapse from the inside.

It had only been a few months since he had come here, and he didn't have anyone like Rose to care for. It was only natural that he wouldn't feel the same as he would if Apeiron met the same fate.



While Damien was considering all of this, the group arrived back at Dalia city. Shen Li dismounted his beast before turning to face the crowd of cultivators before him.

“Although there were some unforeseen circumstances, we still managed to succeed in our task. I found this on that man I fought earlier, so there’s no doubt about it.”

A triangular token appeared in front of him, it was blood red in color and contained a strange 7-pointed star insignia.

“This is the Sect Master token of the Beguiled Devil Sect, so it’s obvious who the leader of that force was. As for why they committed a massacre of their own people, that isn’t our concern.

“I will mark this mission as a success and report to all the powers from whom we sought help. By the time you reach your respective sects, it will be done. So, you don’t have to worry about the rewards.

“Until then, I have many things to take care of. Thank you all once again for your help in this endeavor, and may you have a safe trip back to your homes.”

Leaving these words, Shen Li entered his city. Slowly but surely, the crowd of cultivators dispersed in every direction, following Shen Li’s words.

Likewise, Damien and Long Chen headed back to the Celestial Star Palace. It was a truly eventful trip for them, filled with riveting battles and many level increases, but at the same time, it alluded to a scourge existing within the shadows.

“Damien, what are your plans once we get back to the sect?” Long Chen inquired.

“Hmm?”

“B-boss.”

“Ah! So you were talking to me! Hmm, I don’t really have anything planned. I’ll probably go see my master first and tell him about our trip before I decided anything.”

Long Chen nodded, having a similar idea, but didn’t say anything else.

Truthfully, he had a lot of fun on this mission. He wasn’t the type to outwardly show his emotions, but having someone who could keep up with him and also beat him in competition brought him genuine excitement,

Due to this, he wanted to continue going on missions with Damien. He felt it was the best way for him to challenge himself.

But thinking about how he would have to call the shameless idiot “boss” made him reconsider.

With the duo having their own thoughts, they calmly made their way back to the sect.

And it wasn't just them. With the beast tide over, the girls were also on their way back to the Supreme Fairy Paradise. What they didn't know, however, was that Dia's call to the Sect Master led to an unexpected surprise waiting for them.

## Chapter 158 - Mission End [2]

An entire week later, Damien and Long Chen finally arrived back at the familiar mountain that they called home.

It had only been around 2 months since they had left even though the mission was held for 6 months, causing the guards at the gate a good deal of surprise.

As for what they did when they got back, they went straight to the mission hall to claim their rewards.

"Alright, the sign of completion has been given by the one who issued the requests. Just give me your disciple tokens and I can mark it as done." The mission hall elder said in a surprised tone.

After all, an outer court disciple taking on a major mission was already surprising enough, let alone the speed at which they finished.

When the process was finished, the elder handed each of them their spirit stones before sending them on their way.

Damien didn't waste any time, making his way up the mountain to see his master. He had nothing better to do, plus he wanted to see if his master would teach him anything new.

And before long, he arrived at the familiar pagoda. Knocking on the door, he patiently waited for someone to answer.

“Looks like you’re back from your mission.” A cold voice answered as the door opened, revealing a familiar beautiful face.

“Of course I’m back, did you miss me?” Damien replied.

“And why would I do that.” Xue Ruyue responded immediately.

Damien wanted to tease this senior sister of his more since he still wasn’t over the way she treated him, but it was clear she wouldn’t be entertaining it:

Rolling his eyes, he changed the topic. “Is master here?”

Ruyue averted her gaze into the pagoda before lightly nodding her head, stepping out of the way.

Watching him enter the pagoda with a smile on his face, Ruyue’s brow wrinkles slightly before she let out a soft sigh and followed him.

Unfortunately for her, Tian Yang had explicitly stated that she had to be present for the coming conversation.

And of course, he had been aware of Damien’s return from the second he stepped foot in the sect.

Damien walked through the small hallway lined with ornate paintings before reaching the wooden sliding doors that led to the room he had previously been in. It was the same room where he had gone through that incomplete transformation.

“Oho, looks like you’ve leveled up a bit, haven’t you.” An aged voice inquired as Damien slid open the doors.

“It’s nothing major. I still haven’t been able to do anything about my skills yet.” Damien replied. It was probably the thing he was most concerned about at the moment.

With spatial magic and even vector control, he was able to level them up significantly in short amounts of time. Even if he hadn’t completely grasped the more esoteric branches of the magics, he was still able to increase his proficiency.

However, it wasn’t the same anymore. Whether it be his dimensional magic, the question marks in his status, or even creating a domain, he was able to do none of them.

He felt some sort of block in his psyche, something that was preventing him from making any more progress, but he couldn’t figure out what it was.

Even with the Void Heart Sword Law that he had only recently picked up, he hadn’t been able to grasp its movements at all.

Seeing the worry evident on Damien’s face, Tian Yang slightly smiled. “Is this the first roadblock you hit?”

Damien nodded back with a difficult expression. He was made painfully aware of how smooth his journey thus far had been.

“Well, the 3rd great realm is like that for every cultivator. It’s a realm where you aren’t trying to increase your skills or simply level up, you’re trying to increase your connection to the elements.”

Damien looked up at the old man, evidently confused. Connect with the elements? What did that even mean?

“Don’t be in such a rush, I’ll obviously tell you now that I’ve brought it up. Tell me, do you know what the difference between the 3rd and 4th realm is?”

Damien once again shook his head. Any time he asked or even heard about 4th class, everyone always shut him down and told him it was too early for him to learn about it.

But he didn’t think so. He felt that the best way for him to work towards the next realm was to know exactly what it contained and what he was hoping to achieve.

“The entry point to the 4th great realm is called Law Connection realm for a very good reason. It’s because up until that point, you were using elements in their most primary form.

“Your affinities are simply the elements you are most in tune with and the ones you can become proficient in. You might even have some affinities that aren’t listed in your status simply because you don’t have enough talent in them compared to your main affinities.

“But that doesn’t mean you can’t learn them. With years and years of practice, such a thing can become possible, unlocking new affinities in your status. However, this ain’t the main point I’m trying to make.”

Noticing Ruyue standing in the back and listening, Tian Yang motioned her forward. Naturally, she complied, arriving next to Damien who had taken a seat while listening to the lecture.

Seeing his disciples paying rapt attention, he continued. “Until the 3rd realm, you’ve been using elements in their base form, in the way the mana is presented to you. But did you really think that’s all there was?”

Tian Yang waved his hand, causing spatial essence to fill the room. However, there was something intrinsically different about the mana, as if it was on a higher level.

“When you step into 4th class, your being evolves and you come into contact with something called Laws. These are the laws that govern the universe and grant it stability, these are the building blocks of everything we know.”

The spatial essence continued to dance around the room, sometimes being formless but other times having pressure that weighed down on the two disciples like a mountain.

“A Law Connection realm expert has just recently come into contact with laws and has to gain an understanding of their function to enter the Law Sea realm. As for how this relates back to your current problem? That’s simple.”

“I have to understand my elements more so that they can evolve into laws!” Damien suddenly interrupted.

Tian Yang smiled and nodded, letting his disciple come to his own conclusion. He could almost see the gears spinning in Damien's head after reaching this point.

What he needed to do now wasn't simply train his skills or gain levels. What he needed to do was gain a deeper understanding of elements and their mana itself.

It wasn't about comprehending space, and it wasn't about any of the destructive power he was always trying to learn. It was deeper than that.

It was as if something clicked in his mind. What he was lacking, what was stopping him from advancing, he understood it all.

What Damien needed was a path forward. It was like he had been drifting aimlessly in a massive desert with no idea which direction was north. But now, he knew exactly where to go.

Even if he didn't have a starting point right now, even if he still had plenty of things to do before he reached the point Tian Yang was speaking about, at least he knew it existed.

Damien's spirit burned with fervor once again. His desire for strength blossomed. He knew exactly what he wanted to do.

Chapter 159 - Second Lesson [1]

Even if Tian Yang said nothing else today, Damien already got what he wanted. He had been drifting aimlessly for so long that he felt extremely fulfilled with just this small amount of knowledge.



At first, he was confused as to why the 4th class mattered at all to him right now, since he had just reached level 115, but it all made sense after Tian Yang explained.

In fact, it wasn't just Damien who had gained something from this teaching. Even Ruyue was absorbed in thought over what she had just learned.

Being the little princess of the Xue family, she naturally had much more knowledge than Damien about such things. She knew about laws long before she became a 3rd class expert.

Still, any explanation about the subject or about how to reach that point wasn't given to her. With her monstrous talent, it was expected of her to figure it out herself.

And maybe she would have successfully done so, but it wouldn't have been any time soon.

When the duo returned their attention to Tian Yang, there was an extra hint of worship in their eyes.

It was only natural for them to feel this way. Tian Yang didn't actually say much at all, but his inflection and the way he led their thoughts made them both reach a level of enlightenment about their cultivation.

While it was new for Damien, Ruyue only felt adoration before today. After all, her master was also of the idea that she should figure most things out for herself.

But ever since this junior brother of hers joined the fray, her master was much more open with his teachings. She didn't know whether to be jealous or thankful for this, so she just stopped thinking about it altogether.

“Now that you’ve understood, allow me to go more in-depth about the concepts you both need to pay attention to. First of all, what exactly is mana?” Tian Yang questioned.

“It’s the building blocks of everything,” Damien replied almost instantly. This was the basis of everything he knew.

“It is the energy that birthed the universe.” Ruyue followed up.

Tian Yang only gave a slight nod at their answers. “While you are both technically right, do you know why that is? Or rather, do you truly understand what you just told me?”

The duo pondered once more. What was there to understand past these points? Why was it necessary to know that?

Damien wondered what it truly meant for mana to be the building blocks of all things. For the sake of organizing his thoughts, he spoke out loud.

“Mana is present within everything. Animals, plants, or even just the air around us. But these things can exist without mana, right? Planets that haven’t awakened their mana yet live like this for up to many eons without trouble.”

“That’s only partially true,” Ruyue answered, doing the same as him. “While unawakened worlds live without a constant influx of mana, it doesn’t mean that mana isn’t present within them. Mana is within everything from the start of its formation, even if it’s a minuscule amount. Without mana, life can’t sustain itself.”

“Well then, what about oxygen and nitrogen? What about the base elements and concepts such as physics? Mana breaks such laws simply with its presence, so how can they exist in a place where mana resides within everything?”

“Those concepts are simply human designs to label the unknown. Not understanding how things worked, they made such an explanation. And besides, mana itself doesn’t break physics, it just bends the existing laws. It’s the use of mana through elements that can totally break the concept.”

Damien thought about what she said and understood that it had logic behind it. The existence of mana alone doesn’t break any laws. Mana is a neutral energy that doesn’t actually do anything unless it’s willed to do so.

“So, mana itself is tame, but its usage is anything but. Mana existed before the laws of the universe were formed, thus being a higher form of power than them?”

“I...I’m not sure.” Ruyue responded as her brows creased. “If mana is a higher form than laws, then why can we only use laws after entering the 4th great realm instead of manipulating them from the start?”

Damien also didn’t know the answer to this, but there were plenty of theories swirling through his mind. As for the main one...

“What if...us lifeforms who exist in mana’s sphere of influence don’t have the capability to wield the laws that make up the world simply from the start? What if the use of elements for the first 3 realms is a build-up or something like training wheels before we can use laws?”

Ruyue’s eyes widened. The answer was so simple, yet they couldn’t think of it! Ruyue almost leaped at the thought, grabbing Damien’s shoulders in excitement.

“That’s right! Just like master said, we need to have a firm grasp on mana and the elements before we can use laws! Without it, it’s impossible for us to control something so esoteric and powerful that actually forms the universe! Laws are too high in power for any normal being to use if they don’t gather the appropriate strength first!”

Damien was a bit stunned by her move, snapping out of his tangent thoughts. He ended up staring into her bright golden eyes that were far too close for comfort.

Especially with the excitement she was showing at the moment, Ruyue was like a different person. Rather than the cold and distant senior sister he had gotten used to, she was just a normal and agreeable woman.

Ruyue wasn’t in any better condition. She hadn’t noticed her state of mind until she had already gotten close enough to Damien where if he wanted to, he could take full advantage of her.

Since when did they become close enough for her to act like this? The answer was that they hadn’t. There was just something about Damien that made her drop her guard. Not to mention, their banter had been so smooth that she almost forgot he was essentially a stranger to her.

As she gazed into those red and purple eyes, she felt something that she hadn’t felt in a long time. It was like she met someone she could actually enjoy spending her time with, even if it was just as fellow disciples under the same master.

“Kuhum...” a sudden cough interrupted their thoughts. “Now now, I don’t mind if my disciples get closer, but I’d prefer you not do it in front of this old man. Hahahaha!”

The duo quickly separated, not daring to look at each other or Tian Yang at this moment. There wasn't even anything romantic about the interaction, so why were they acting like blushing children? It amused Tian Yang so much that he almost couldn't contain himself.

Shaking his head, he returned to the previous topic. "You're both on the right track. Although the things you said were just theories, they do contain some truth to them. As long as you continue digging deeper, you should be able to form a true hypothesis. At that time, come back to me for help.

"As for what to do from now on, well the synergy between you two is surprising even to me. When did you two become so similar? Last time I checked you were at each other's necks."

Tian Yang almost failed to hold back another fit of laughter but managed to continue.

"Because of this, it's probably best for you to work together from now on. I feel that the best way for you to get results is such. Not to mention, your affinities complement each other perfectly."

Although the two of them had some hesitation, they agreed that they wouldn't have been able to figure things out as fast if it wasn't for their combined effort.

Sighing in unison, they continued listening to the lecture.

Chapter 160 - Second Lesson [2]

Tian Yang's lecture continued into the night, teaching the duo many things and widening their horizons far past what they thought possible.

"That should do it for today. I can't give you all the answers at the start now can I?" He teased.

“Hmm, since there’s nothing else to teach you for today, how about you spar each other? You two haven’t really had much interaction before today, after all.”

Damien and Ruyue looked at each other, their interest peaked. While Ruyue had seen a glimpse of Damien’s power when he was learning about teleportation earlier, she didn’t know his true capabilities.

And for Damien, Ruyue was a complete mystery. She had two elements whose mana looked similar to ice, but neither of them were the same. He had Zara’s ice element for comparison so he was sure of this fact.

The only thing he was sure of was the fact that she was at the mid-levels of 3rd class, perhaps at the Core Expansion realm.

And technically by Cloud Plane standards, Damien was also at this realm even if his level didn’t match up. He had formed his core long ago and expanding it wasn’t something he had to do manually.

It was one of the greatest benefits of his Ananta System.

Seeing that both disciples expressed their willingness, Tian Yang released his spatial mana and teleported them out of the pagoda.

Even if the pagoda had the strength to handle their power, it didn’t mean that there was enough space for them to have a proper fight.

When the two were able to see again, they found themselves in the middle of a grassy plain. They could clearly see the Star Mountain in the distance, but they were far enough to where nobody from the sect would be alerted to their battle.

Standing between the two, Tian Yang smiled. “Alright, since this is just a friendly spar, I want you both to hold back a bit. Just enough so there are no serious injuries. I’m looking at you, Damien. I don’t want another incident like the one during the disciple examination.”

Damien averted his gaze while whistling the tune to an old anime he used to watch. It’s not like he would ever admit that his actions back then were a mistake.

Ignoring Damien’s amusing reaction, Tian Yang turned to Ruyue, who also nodded lightly. Seeing that they were both ready, he didn’t waste any more time.

Taking out a circular token, Tian Yang threw it in the air, making it flip around its own axis. “The match will start when this token hits the ground.”

It was like the token moved in slow motion. It flipped continuously until finally, it landed on the ground with a soft thud.

But the sound was overrun by the sonic booms that came forth when both Damien and Ruyue charged at each other.

Damien pulled out his sword while a shining white spear emerged in Ruyue’s hands.

‘Void Sword Art First Form: Bladeless’

### ‘Moon Goddess’s Spear First Form: Tide Formation’

A wave of spatial mana charged forward, wanting to tear the world asunder, but it was met by a firm yet gentle force from Ruyue’s spear.

The tide of mana was pushed and molded to her will, completely dispersing before it was replaced by her own.

An iridescent white mana gushed out in waves as Ruyue swept her spear in a horizontal motion.

Seeing the incoming tide, Damien didn’t move. Instead, he changed tactics.

### ‘Magnitude and Direction’

The space around him bent as he tapped his fingers in the air. Swirling vortexes were formed before they charged towards the tide.

And similar to what Ruyue did to him, Damien dispersed her tide. Its forward charge suddenly altered slightly to the left, missing him entirely, and by the time it even reached his position, it was barely at the level of a love tap.

In their first altercation, they came out in a tie.



Without wasting any time, they charged forward once more, knowing that such ranged tactics would only be futile.

‘Void Sword Art 3rd form: Dance of the Void’

‘Moon Goddess’s Spear 2nd Form: Moonlight Serenade’

Although the names of their attacks seemed to allude to a beautiful night filled with elegance and grace, their actual clash was anything but.

Ruyue swung her spear, its weight bearing down on Damien’s sword. Although he was moving in and out of the spatial layers and his body became elusive, she was still able to pinpoint his every motion.

Clang-!

Once again their weapons connected, causing a massive shockwave to emanate from their location. Luckily, Tian Yang was there to minimize the damage.

The scale of their clash became wider and wider, with both of them becoming ethereal to the point where they were almost one with mana. The sparks flying from each of their clashes being the only indication that they existed within reality.

Looking into those fierce golden eyes that burned with fighting spirit, Damien grinned.

‘Void Sword Art 4th Form: Spatial Collapse’

He didn’t overcharge the attack this time, so there was no gaping black hole. Still, the results of the strike were devastating.

Boom-!

Everything around them crumbled, with the fabric of reality seemingly shattering like glass.

The duo was within an entirely black space where even light couldn’t penetrate, but the nauseating swirl of the blackness made it clear that space was still collapsing,

Ruyue felt lightheaded and she could barely understand how time was passing. Everything seemed so muddled together as if things that weren’t meant to collide were fusing. She knew that if she didn’t get serious, she would fall.

‘Blood Moon’

A seemingly impossible thing happened. Cracks started appearing in the black space before one portion of it turned entirely red. It wasn’t just a red light, though, it was an entire miniature celestial body.

A true blood moon appeared within the black space, illuminating it with its light. The ebbing tides of collapse slowed to a halt as tranquility was brought back to the atmosphere. But before space could reconstruct itself, Ruyue made her move.

## ‘Moon Goddess Descent’

Her pristine white hair began to glow with an almost holy aura, turning into a shining silver. Her bright golden eyes became dyed in silver. If anyone saw her right now, they would truly think she was the embodiment of the moon.

Ruyue raised her hand lightly before gracefully waving it like she was conducting an orchestra. All this while, Damien could only stand in a stupor. It was as if he got charmed by her new appearance.

But Ruyue didn't wait for him to return to himself. Her movements sped up, causing the tides of chaos to flow once more. This time, in reverse.

The blackness that encompassed them enveloped Damien like a cocoon, limiting his movements before beams of lunar energy tore through space towards his location.

Bang-!

Holes were pierced through the cocoon and although Ruyue couldn't see Damien's state at the moment, she was sure he had been injured. Although it may not have sounded like much, her lunar energy was as destructive as it was gentle.

Not to mention, she added a little something else into it.

However, if she could see Damien at the moment, she'd be endlessly surprised. He was bleeding with several holes in his body, but a wide grin painted his face.

He had just learned something new, after all.

Damien looked up at Ruyue's beautiful form, his eyes piercing through the abyssal darkness of the cocoon. An iridescent light began to shine from his pupils as two commanding words left his mouth,

“Celestial Authority.”