

## Void 1531

Chapter 1531 Ice Luan Mountain [4]

"Human, you aren't a dragon, are you?"

The question surprised Damien.

First off, even he couldn't logically see himself as a human anymore, so it was nice hearing someone else say it.

Second, though Damien did indeed have some dragon in him at some point, it had been a long time since his race had changed into something beyond existing terms.

That draconic bloodline was already gone, turned into nothing more than an ability that Damien hadn't used in ages.

"I'm not. Why are you asking?"

He was genuinely curious. He took steps closer to the beast without realizing, but the beast didn't react, likely due to his blatant absence of hostility.

"That does not make any sense. If you are not a dragon, then what are you?" The beast asked, perplexed beyond belief.

"Let's just say that I'm a human who's a little special. Now then, why are you so adamant about me being a dragon?" Damien pressed again.

"Naturally, it is because you have a qualification."

The beast unfurled itself from around the tree. It was massive within the cave, several hundred feet in length and three digits in its height as well.

However, this beast had shrunken itself for convenience. Its true size couldn't be estimated from this appearance.

Nevertheless, it turned to face Damien directly, looking him up and down.

"I simply cannot fathom how a qualification made its way into a human body. Please excuse my rudeness."

"Hmm..."

Damien furrowed his brows.

"This qualification you're talking about, could it be..."

"It is something that should only be found in the body of a Holy Dragon or his chosen heir."

Enlightenment struck Damien.

'If it's a Holy Dragon, then...there's really only one answer.'

A Holy Dragon wasn't some sort of religious term, nor did it have anything to do with elements or abilities.

"Holy Dragon" was a sacred term among dragonkind, a position of absolute honor.

Those granted this title were the true powerhouses of the Dragon Clan. They were the strongest of the strong.

And Damien...he did have the fortune to meet one long ago.

'The Azure Dragon.'

It was an extremely valuable meeting for Damien. The memories he'd gained from that senior were still locked in his head, but many flecks of knowledge about the Heavenly World had drifted away from the pack and entered his mind every now and then.

The Azure Dragon's memories were a big part of the reason why he knew legends like the one about the Harmony Fruit, and they were also the reason why he knew what a Holy Dragon was.

But from what this beast was implying...

'...that senior left me with a lot more than I originally thought.'

What the beast sensed was obvious at this point. [Azure], which he'd gained from the Azure Dragon, was a qualification for something Damien still didn't know.

"What is the purpose of a qualification?" He asked.

The beast looked into his eyes, seemingly trying to glean something about him.

It had also been using this time to think, to rationalize the existence before it.

The conclusion it had come to was not an acceptable one, but it couldn't be the first to look curious.

'This child has come for that fruit...'

If that was the case, then it could buy itself some time.

"Climb this mountain properly and undergo the trials that have been set within the path. Only then will you be able to touch that fruit, and only then will I give you the answers you desire."

The beast raised its head proudly, looking down at Damien as if there was nothing left to be said.

Damien stared back at it, deadpan.

He could read its thoughts quite clearly.

'This beast...it talks smart, but it's pretty dumb.'

It didn't realize how much its thoughts reflected on its face, but Damien could basically read, "he'll leave, so I can secretly watch him and figure out what he is, right?" like it was written in big letters on its forehead.

Whatever the case, it was true that he'd need to scale the mountain properly. His original goal was the Harmony Fruit.

'It'll be annoying, but if the only restriction is on teleportation and Existence-related abilities, then I should be able to do it fast.'

Damien turned around, flying out unfazed by the blizzard and dropping back to the base of the mountain.

'What a strange interaction.'

It must've been because the luan had some dragon blood in its veins.

'No, if it knows about things related to Holy Dragons, it has probably lived in the Western Region before.'

What made him curious was why the "qualification" suddenly came to light like this.

'Even the fact that the fruit exists is a coincidence that relates to the Azure Dragon. The fact that a draconic entity exists here that can immediately detect the "qualification" can't be a coincidence as well.'

It really was curious.

After all, whether it be [Azure], or the dragon egg that had been peacefully resting in the Sanctuary for all this time, neither had ever reacted since that day.

'If that beast actually knows some information, it's worth going through a bit of a hassle to gain access to it.'

He raised his head. The peak that he was at before couldn't be seen anymore. It was simply too high.

'Well, let's make the best of a tedious situation.'

Damien cracked a smile.

'I hope these so-called "trials" are entertaining.'

Damien took his first steps up the mountain the way he was intended to climb it.

Little did he know, he was not the only person walking this trail right now.

He was not the only one who had heard that legend and went searching for the Harmony Fruit at Ice Luan Mountain.

However, it was rare for the travelers who take on this trial to meet each other, since the actual timing between climbs often didn't line up.

This was a unique case, where two climbers had arrived at roughly similar times.

And they were two climbers who knew each other, at that.

About halfway up the mountain was a woman with swamp-green hair, a woman Damien had encountered in the past, though not on the best of terms.

Envy of the Four Evils.

The Four Evils had not had a good time after their encounter with Damien.

The Straea Clan's policy on failure was well known by now. They were essentially stripped of their titles and thrown away, replaced by people who followed Malefice Straea.

And in that process, Wrath had been crippled.

The Four Evils may have been competitors at one point, but after they were left on their own, they were all each other had.

The bond they'd formed was quite strong. Strong enough for Envy to risk her life at Ice Luan Mountain in order to get the Harmony Fruit to cure Wrath.

Unfortunately, there was only one fruit.

And only one of the two of them could take it.

There was a huge distance between them, so, at a glance, one wouldn't believe it was possible for them to meet.

But fate didn't act so kindly to those it didn't like.

And fate seemed to give those it favored everything they desired.

Their meeting was destined. The only question was...

Would it truly go down the way it was expected to?

Chapter 1532 Envy [1]

Damien didn't know what he was expecting, but the trials he had to undergo weren't all that exciting.

In fact, rather than tests of strength or ability, which was what these kinds of entities usually tested, these trials were tests of character disguised as other things.

For instance, the first scenario Damien encountered when he was ascending the mountain on foot was a small fox being hunted by three coyote-like creatures.

Within his mind, he was suddenly provoked to interfere in the conflict, whether to save the fox or do something completely different.

It seemed the correct answer was to save the fox and allow it to see another day, but that wasn't what Damien did.

After all, this mountain was a cruel place.

All beasts needed to survive, whether it was the hunted or the hunters. If he saved the fox, sure, that one fox would live another day.

But since it was here, cornered by its predators, its pack had obviously abandoned it, and that was if it had one to begin with.

That fox wouldn't survive past the next day even if it was saved now.

On the other hand, how many mouths would be fed by its meat once it was killed?

Ecosystems existed for a reason. They were born from the natural relationships multiple species had with each other.

And when they existed, they usually existed in balance.

Unless an invasive species came and interrupted that balance, the ecosystem would continue to thrive and become more complex.

Damien was invasive here. This wasn't his food chain to meddle in, and if the foxes were being hunted for food, it was likely they were also hunting smaller beasts in the same way.

This mountain didn't have enough vegetation to support herbivores. That was certain.

Nevertheless, Damien's nonintervention didn't coincide with the given scenario, so he felt a strange pulse in his mind like something was rejecting him.

'What an annoying tree.' He thought as he sensed it.

He understood its intentions.

The Harmony Fruit had abilities that the first person who consumed it never dreamed of. If he had been a practitioner, he would've already been one of the peak forces of the world.

To create an absolute connection between the mind, body, and soul would increase one's power manifold. And since it couldn't be broken, in most situations one could be considered semi-immortal.

After all, just like in Damien's case, unless all three were destroyed at the same time, they wouldn't die.



Of course, the level of immortality didn't compare to Damien's, since his connection of mind, body, and soul also gave all three aspects the blessing of the Void.

However, especially for a Divinity, and even more so for a True God, achieving this state and keeping it unbroken was deeply interconnected with their power progression.

That tree didn't want the Harmony Fruit to end up in the hands of someone with a corrupted soul. It didn't want to create a monster that terrorized others, for, as the nature of the fruit it bore suggested, the tree was a pacifist.

It produced harmony and embraced it.

It simply couldn't allow the creation of a character that would plunge the world into chaos.

That was all good and fine, but Damien had many other ways to prove that he wasn't such a person.

For instance, he literally had the concept of harmony comprehended. If he just had an opportunity to show that to the tree, it would probably hand over its fruit without much of a fuss.

'The problem is that old entities like these are stubborn.'

Unless Damien underwent the trials in some way, shape, or form, the tree would refuse to acknowledge his "sincerity."

In essence, his climb right now was for courtesy purposes at most.

Still, it was something he had to do, so he did it diligently.

Several similar trials presented themselves as he continued his climb.

Philosophical problems, testing his morals and his desire to help the weak.

Damien...didn't have much of the latter, but he did like bullying the strong.

His morals had become a lot more neutral with time.

To him, right and wrong couldn't be judged by an outside party, because each side had their own version of right and wrong.

Instead, he would look at the entire situation and judge based on facts alone. Like he did with the fox, he simply wouldn't judge right or wrong. Since the coyotes were justified, he let them be.

Though, it wasn't like Damien didn't have his own views on what right and wrong were.

If he thought something was acceptable, he'd leave it be.

However, those things that he found unacceptable were different.

If even Damien was forced to acknowledge that something was blatantly wrong, then that thing was not allowed to exist in the world anymore.

That quality of his was also shown in the trials.

It was difficult to understand Damien's thought process anymore.

Things that made sense to him just made sense.

If others didn't agree, then fine. If his opinion didn't fit conventions, that was fine as well.

As long as he was acting in the best interests of himself and the people he was close to, as long as his heart wouldn't feel burdened, he would do as he pleased.

And the world would have to accept him for what he was.

Either that...

Or it could cope.

Because he wasn't willing to put on a front for anyone or anything, even the tree that was his father's lifeline.

He believed that sincerity, without the quotations this time, was a better way to gain someone's favor than showing them a pretty picture of what they wanted to see.

Was his thought process valid? Or was it just childish?

The more Damien experienced, the harder he found it to concern himself with matters outside his own.

That was why he went through the trials giving mostly answers that disappointed the tree, but answers it couldn't deny.

Damien's progress was fast. He moved rapidly in comparison to any other travelers who had dared to scale the mountain, and he made decisions without even an ounce of hesitation.

Despite the fact that it didn't agree with Damien's moral code, it couldn't help but respect his confidence in his actions.

And no matter how much it wanted to reject his opinions, it couldn't say that he was wrong.

After all, it lived on this mountain and it understood the ecosystem that had formed here.

It wanted Damien to be more benevolent, but at the end of the day, its beliefs still leaned towards harmony.

And Damien was practically a personification of absolute harmony.

Good and evil that had to exist for balance would not be touched. However, anything disrupting that balance would be destroyed.

It was indeed a respectable code.

But that was all in the past.

What the tree wanted to see most...

...was how Damien would react to someone teetering on the edge of that balance.

He made it almost three-fourths of the way up the mountain in a matter of days. His pace allowed him to do something unthinkable to most.

He'd caught up to the climber ahead of him.

And now he was facing Envy of the Four Evils, whose eyes were as wide as saucers from the moment she realized who had approached her.

He'd caught up to the climber ahead of him.

And now he was facing Envy of the Four Evils, whose eyes were as wide as saucers from the moment she realized who had approached her.

Was their battle inevitable?

Or...

## Chapter 1533 Envy [2]

Their meeting was as coincidental as coincidence could be.

Envy was currently at the top of a steep slope that was practically a cliff. Trying to climb it with nothing more than the strength of one's body was difficult, but she'd managed it and made it to the trial waiting for her at the top.

She could already see the cave in the distance. It was still a little over a hundred kilometers away, but its light blue glow illuminated the mountainside, making its location clear to all.

She was still in the middle of the trial at that time.

Damien made his way up the same cliff, however, his physical abilities were far superior to hers.

After all, to climb this mountain as the tree wanted, one couldn't use mana to assist their movements.

The only time they could use their strength was when they needed to fight.

Damien's physical body was preposterous. It had evolved past what was possible with a mostly human form, but because of his Void Physique, all the qualities of his physical body were contained within the form he desired.

As such, Damien could do things that others couldn't do without mana easily with his physique alone.

That was why he scaled the mountain so fast.

The weather didn't affect him, and the snow and ice didn't inhibit his speed at all.

Powered by monstrous capability that genuinely couldn't be matched anywhere in the Heavenly World, Damien rushed until he managed to reach the same place where Envy was.

The answer was no. Their battle was short and concise, and hardly anyone got too injured.

And he scaled that cliff before she could even finish making the choice presented to her.

Damien's entrance wasn't quiet. He wasn't expecting to see anyone here, so he didn't really hold back.

A massive amount of snow was thrown into the air, and a small avalanche tumbled down the mountainside below. He practically stood there and shouted, "Look at me!"

Envy turned around, and when her eyes managed to peer through the thick cloud of white, they immediately widened into saucers.

It was the man that still haunted her nightmares.

Did Damien really embarrass the 4 Evils to that extent?

The answer was no. Their battle was short and concise, and hardly anyone got too injured.

However, Damien's casual, nonchalant behavior as he left was the start of their nightmare.

The torture they'd endured after, the betrayal they felt as they were thrown away by the man they gave their loyalty to, all of it was attributed to Damien.

So naturally, all four of the Evils had thought about what would happen if they met him again over and over again.

Wrath wanted another battle.

Lust wanted to tear him apart.

Gluttony was still as silent as ever, but there seemed to be a subtle change in his demeanor whenever Damien was mentioned.

And Envy...

Envy didn't ever want to see him again.

Her power was always based on stealing power from others. That was how she managed to get so strong.

Of course, she never had the chance to make physical contact with Damien, but that didn't mean she didn't glimpse the power he held.

She glimpsed it. So much so that it still haunted her soul.

In that moment when Damien controlled their mana, there was a tangible effect that the others seemed to miss in their shock.

To Envy, it was a lot more pronounced, since she'd specifically worked to train her sense of touch to the best it could be.

She felt like she was being consumed by a swarm of ants.

Thousands and thousands of invisible hands grasped her body and refused to let go, as if clearly telling her that they could kill her whenever they wanted to.

The others didn't understand what had happened that day. Even when they talked about it afterward, none of them acknowledged that Damien truly did the most obvious thing that came to all of their minds.

But Envy was different.

She didn't doubt his capabilities.

She knew exactly what he'd done.

In that moment, all the Law in the world, no, the Heavenly Order itself was under Damien's control.

That was not something they could handle. Not then, and not now, after Damien had been given plenty of time to grow stronger.

She felt genuine fear when she looked at him, but she was frozen in place.

She couldn't fight.

But she couldn't flee either.

Not in a place like this.

She just stared at him, bewildered and terrified, like a lost lamb in front of a tiger.

And Damien...

What was he to feel from that?

The emotion in her eyes wasn't hidden at all. He recognized it before he even recognized her.



And more than that, one couldn't forget that he could read her existence.

Envy of the 4 Evils. The first time Damien met her, she truly did resemble her namesake.

Her heart was filled with green. Jealousy towards her peers, jealousy towards other people's talent and fortune, jealousy towards the world.

It was a disgusting heap of negativity towards anything and everything. It was an envy that bordered on greed.

She wanted everything others had. She wished she had it instead of them.

Even though her station was so high, her authority was so vast, she still wanted more after seeing how people like Malevalon Straea could live.

Her name was both a reminder of her origins and a mark of shame.

The Envy he saw in front of him now was not the same person.

It was almost miraculous how a single person had changed so much in such a short period of time.

Envy's heart was no longer clouded. It seemed like she'd lost all ambition.

Her desires were like her heart used to be, extremity clouded by doubt.

She didn't know what she wanted, but she didn't want to experience the things Malevalon and Malefice Straea forced her to experience ever again.

She wanted peace.

Perhaps she'd been shocked into reality, but Envy's mind now was truly something Damien couldn't believe.

Even more so since it was completely genuine.

'What did she have to go through to become like this?'

For all of her ego and confidence to be shattered, for all of her ambition and greed to be abolished...

Damien moved forward.

Envy stepped back, but she wasn't fast enough to do anything. Because of her chaotic mental state, she even forgot she could use mana.

Damien grabbed her head. He could see how scared she was, but he wasn't planning to kill her.

Instead, he delved into her memories, reading her existence.

He encountered almost no resistance at all.

'She's been traumatized beyond belief.'

That much could be told from the surface alone.

The woman was haggard, and despite being a powerful God, she was acting like a harmless mortal.

But her external appearance...

The things one could see by looking at her could hardly alert one of the type of trauma she suffered.

Damien definitely wasn't ready.

Because the things he saw in her existence, the things that had been mostly erased from her memories but engraved in her soul as fear...

Seeing those things, even Damien had the urge to vomit.

Chapter 1534 Envy [3]

The 4 Evils were all different people. The way they thought about life and the way they reacted to external stimuli were different.

Wrath was more suited for his namesake than any of the rest. His immediate reaction was rage. He directed his anger at anything he could find until he could stop thinking about the things he didn't want to think about.

Lust was more reserved. Despite her title, she was not such a person. Rather, she isolated herself from the world when she needed to cope with something. It would become hard to see her until she'd found some peace.

Gluttony was strange. He never seemed to show any emotion, but there was definitely something going on in his head.

Nobody could understand him, but Envy could see that there was something going on in his mind.

And as for Envy herself she overcorrected in a sense. Her entire desire for chaos was overthrown by a desire for peace, and anything related to her old life made her weaker.

Regardless of how they dealt with trauma, regardless of whether those methods were constructive or destructive, the fact couldn't be denied that they'd experienced something extremely traumatic.

Damien wasn't the only one who could dilate time. That was something he learned when he read Envy's existence.

Just as he'd bent time so he could spend more of it with his family, Straea had altered its flow in its prison system.bender

Anyone being tortured or imprisoned in those cells would experience time at a rate far longer than in the ordinary world. That meant that despite only a few years passing since they'd been abandoned by Straea, the 4 Evils spent a lot more time than that in prison.

What were they being tortured for?

Even they didn't know.

Perhaps their lives had been spared because they'd become sacrifices for some cause, but the Straea Clan only planned to cripple their Divinities and leave a lasting impression on their souls.

They, unlike everyone who had come before them, were spared.

But every time something related to practitioners was mentioned, they'd react violently. Envy was only able to make this trip because she was on her own, searching for a way to save her comrades.

The methods used to make sure they'd remain like that for the rest of their lives were monstrous.

Regular torture techniques couldn't compare. Hell, even the creative ways Damien had used to torture people seemed like child's play compared to what the Straea Clan had done.

Many of those methods were unspeakable, unmentionable. At the tamest level, they were already committing atrocities beyond anything Damien could imagine.

The torture lasted for almost ten years. By the time it was over, the 4 Evils that the world knew had been erased.

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'...they weren't left alive without reason.'

Damien slowly calmed himself, pushing the cruelty that he witnessed out of his mind.

The Straea Clan never let anyone live. Its people were even willing to kill children if they acted out of line.

The 4 Evils didn't live because the clan finally found some semblance of mercy.

They were alive because they were being used for something else.

'These four carry seeds inside of them.'

Rather than seeds, it was better to call them fragments.

They felt something like the dark material Damien had faced when he was in the Trial World, but at a far more advanced level.

'Is it supposed to possess them, or are they supposed to use it for power?'

The answer was neither of the two.

These fragments were literal pieces of a singular object, but that object was not an individual.

Still, it had some sort of connection with the Sacred Abyss Universe.

And by what Damien could understand

'...it has something to do with "Descent."'

Whatever the case was, the fact remained that the 4 Evils had become test subjects for the people they once served was true.

And the fact that they were no longer the people they used to be was the same.

'Still, they're dangerous people. If Wrath loses control, if Lust loses control, and if Gluttonywell, if Gluttony does anything, there'll be trouble.'

The only one who was really harmless right now was Envy.

'But is it worth ending them?'

Damien had been forced to evaluate his morality once again as he'd climbed this mountain. It felt like this was yet another test.

Unlike the others, however, this one had real-life consequences.

And when reality was added into the equation

'...fuck.'

Damien sighed. In the end, he wasn't as cold-hearted as he liked to believe.

He couldn't just turn a blind eye to this situation. Not that he'd seen it.

"What are you here for?" He asked, taking his hand off of Envy's head.

She stood, shaking, unable to respond.

'Fuck.'

Damien sighed again and used his mana to clear her head, allowing her to answer his question.

"M-my friendto heal my friend"

Damien nodded. It was as he expected.

"You don't need that fruit for that."

He needed the Harmony Fruit. On the other hand, Wrath's problem didn't require such a drastic solution.

Damien raised his hand into the air, ignoring the tree's desire for him to not use mana.

The miracle of creation showed itself on Ice Luan Mountain that day.

Energy coagulated into a ball on Damien's hand that then shaped itself into something like a pear.

The energy turned from blue to a yellowish-gold color. It compressed and hardened until its exterior lost its luster, becoming more natural.

A material object had formed from the energy. A fruit similar to a mango.

However, the fluctuations coming from that fruit were intense, filled with vitality beyond its small form.

"Take this and feed it to him. He'll be healed, though, he may not get his Godly strength back."

Envy looked at the fruit in his hand before looking back up at him.

She wanted to question the miracle she'd witnessed, but she was too close to the fruit to say that it was fake.

No, it was absolutely real.

Had this man just created something out of nothing?

This was the person they were trying to kill back then?

She almost wanted to laugh.

It truly was hilarious.

She'd gone through all the work of climbing this mountain only to be given a consolation prize before she could even finish her journey.

Sure, this was enough to heal Wrath, but she couldn't get rid of the bitter feeling in her heart.

Still, she grabbed the fruit out of Damien's hand, cradling it in her own.

He nodded.

"I'll send you back to the ground. Get that back to him as soon as you can."

Envy nodded shakily, and without further ado, Damien enveloped her with spatial mana and sent her away.



When she reappeared, she found herself in the hideout that she and the other Evils had been using as shelter for the past year since they were released from Straea.

And truly, if it weren't for the fruit in her hand, she would've thought all of it was a dream.

It may have been an inconsequential meeting from its first appearance. It seemed like it had ended too soon, in an anticlimactic way even to Envy herself.

But that was just because she didn't know.

That wasn't the last time she'd see Damien.

No, instead

Their next meeting would be sooner than she could ever expect.

Chapter 1535 New Paths [1]

'Fuck.'

The older Damien got, the less he cursed, but he couldn't help himself in this moment.

His mood was soured.

He watched everything that happened to Envy through the perspective of her existence.

He felt her emotions, and he thought her thoughts. He experienced her pain and suffering, and frankly, even he found his mind swayed.

Damien had to take a minute to regain control.

'The 4 Evils'

They didn't have much of an impact on his life, but the first time they appeared they were his enemies.

To come back like this

Was it fate?

Was the world telling him to accept that people could change?

Damien had seen a lot of traitors in his life, and he'd seen a lot of people change for the better.

But none of them really deviated from their core characteristics.

They were always that kind of person, they'd just suppressed their kindness to adapt to this cruel world.

The 4 Evils, on the other hand, were born into cruelty and grew into people who embodied it.

However, if this traumatic experience truly changed them. Whether it would be for the better or for the worse was unknown. Whether it would be permanent was unknown.

Still, for some reason, Damien wanted to see what would happen if he took this chance on them.

'It's a path I've never explored.'

There weren't many things in this world that he hadn't done. Yes, experiences differed and environments differed, but at their core, all of these adventures were the same.

The paths Damien hadn't taken, they didn't exist in the world of adventure or the world of law.

They existed in the world of emotion, of human interaction.

'Interesting'

Damien was bored with the trials of this mountain. He'd thought them unimportant and inconsequential.

But it turned out that even he could learn a thing or two from them after all.

His eyes flickered over to the cave in the distance.

'I'm sure that tree is loving this.'

He could practically feel the beaming smile it had on its proverbial face. The feeling that enveloped him right now was completely different from the one he'd felt during the entire rest of his journey.

'It's not that far from here'

He could do the last stretch in one go.

And perhapshe could take this chance to see what happened if he explored a few more of those unexplored paths.

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Damien did indeed manage to learn something from the mountain.

Life still had more for him.

It had more to show him, more for him to experience. No matter how dull it seemed to get, no matter how much he felt like he'd experienced all there was to experience and seen all there was to see, there was always something more.bender

He just had to be open to it.

Damien's mentality was unshakeable. This was one of his greatest advantages, but at the same time, it was also the very thing making his life seem bland.

He always had the same thoughts, so he always took the same actions.

Basically, Damien was stubborn beyond belief because his belief in himself was so strong.

When he got outside of his box, when he tried things he wouldn't have tried because he felt like he knew what would happen if he did, he experienced new things that he never could have expected.

Because his expectations were still within the box.

Nevertheless, Damien ended up a little thankful to the tree for making him climb the mountain, but that didn't mean he would allow it to be annoying.

He arrived at the cave again within 6 months of his first visit, walking in confidently to the shocked expression of the beast guardian.

"What, why are you making that expression?"

"Youare you really not a dragon?"

"Do you think a dragon could do the things I can?"

"Not in the slightest."

"Then there's your answer."

Damien smiled. He felt a lot more relaxed today than he did back then.

"So, how did I do? Can I finally take what I came for?"

His gaze moved over to the tree, which shook its leaves strangely upon receiving his gaze.

"What's with that expression?"

"That"

The beast made a strange expression.

"Putting that aside, it seems she has approved of you. You may take the fruit."

"Nice."

Damien walked up to the tree, which was now a journey he could make since the beast guardian moved out of the way, and reached up, grabbing hold of the Harmony Fruit.

It was cold and beating with a rhythm that made it feel like a living heart.

This fruit was something anyone would covet. Even Malevalon Straea would leap at it if he knew it was real.

"By the way," he said as he plucked the fruit from the branch where it hung.

"Why me? I don't think I particularly have the character you wanted to see in the person who earns the fruit."

Damien addressed the tree directly, rather than speaking to its guardian beast, causing it to ruffle its leaves in surprise.

The tree was indeed a sentient entity, but nobody ever considered it one.

After all, there was no way for them to communicate.

Or so it thought.

"Having trouble? I guess you're younger than I thought."

Someone who'd been alive as long as Alaric could talk even in his free form.

lightsvel This tree had Divine power, but it didn't even know how to use its Divine Voice. It was a little funny that it acted all high and mighty when it was still just a child.

Nevertheless, Damien put his hand on its trunk and inserted a bit of his mana, transferring some of the memories he received from Alaric.

These would almost never be useful, but to a tree entity that was still in its growth phase, the experience of one who had lived for ages was more important than anything.

[Ahah]

Slowly but surely, the tree was able to find its voice.

[Youare kind.]

It spoke as if it knew language, but that was because it truly did.

Alaric's memories contained more than just knowledge on how to project a voice, after all.

The tree may have been young, but it was born with a powerful status, so it was able to absorb that information rapidly and show improvements with the same speed.

And the first words it spoke when it found its voice were words directed towards Damien.

"Kind?"

He didn't think there were many people in the world who would be able to say the same, but he appreciated the sentiment.

[You think it is a lie.]

The tree read his emotions like a book.

[It is not a lie.]

It insisted, a tinge of emotion filling its words.

[You have a jaded soul...]

[...but you are a hero.]

Damien frowned.

It wasn't because he was angry, but rather

Well, he understood what the tree was trying to say.

He didn't know how it gathered all of that though.

Damien hated heroes.

He grew up watching them and reading about them. In Earth's media, he saw them everywhere, even before the World Awakening when heroes began to rise from the population.

To him, heroes were pitiful. To do so much for nothing, to risk oneself for people who repaid them with hatred whenever Damien saw heroes, he wondered how they kept themselves from just killing everyone and giving up.

But that was the thing, wasn't it?

Hadn't he done the same?

Hadn't he risked his everything to save Grand Heavens Boundary, even saving all of its people when it collapsed?

Hadn't he been risking his life to save the people of Void Palace, and even the people of the Southwestern Region that he'd saved from the Divine Order?

Hell, he'd even given specific orders to save the children abused by Straea and offer them better lives.

Damien hated heroes.

But when it came down to the wire, he couldn't stop himself from trying to be one:



Because nobody else could do it. He was the only one.

His personal reasoning for his heroism didn't matter, nor did his feelings about heroism.

To the people of all worlds, he was a hero.

And that was exactly what the tree saw when it looked at him.

[The reason you were chosen is because you did not come for yourself. Even now, you are being a hero. That is why you deserve my fruit.]

It seemed the tree wanted him to realize something, but he didn't know what.

Still, he accepted its sentiments with a troubled expression and turned away.

Putting aside the thoughts that made his brain melt, there was still another thing he had to hear from those in this cave.

From the guardian beast, to be exact.

During his first visit, it told him about a connection he'd never expected he had.

It was time for him to figure out just what kind of gift the Azure Dragon had left him.

Chapter 1536 New Paths [2]

The guardian beast seemed to know what he was after, because the moment he looked at it, it sighed.

"It seems I have no choice in this matter."

Damien nodded.

"If you wanted to skimp me, you shouldn't have made that promise."

"Yes, it is indeed my fault. That is why I am entertaining your wishes despite your tedious personality."

Damien nodded with a smile.

"As it should be."

Matters that had to do with his mind, he didn't run away from them anymore, but he also didn't needlessly entertain them.

The tree had presented him with questions to ask himself, and he would take sufficient time to ask them when he could deeply ruminate over how he felt.

Until then, wasn't it more fun to unravel mysteries?

"Ah, but before that. Do the two of you have names or anything? It's more convenient for my thought process if I don't have to refer to you as 'the tree' and 'the beast.'"

"I feel somewhat offended by the last bit, but I do indeed have a name. I am Katya. Though I am an Ice Luan, I, obviously, have a considerable draconic ancestry as well. It is complicated."

"As for her..."

"She does not have a name, nor is her species defined. There are none like her, and I did not dare to name her without permission."

Katya, the Ice Luan (dragon?), was the tree's only friend, but even she could only minimally communicate with it.

She could interpret its behaviors and gestures, but until Damien came and provided them with a proper means of communication, she couldn't hear the tree's voice.

Naturally, she wouldn't arbitrarily name it. Not when it was a conscious entity of its own.

"I see..." Damien said, nodding his head in understanding.

"With the properties of the Harmony Fruit taken into consideration, I guess the tree species should be named something like the 'Three Spirit Tree...'"

Since it connected the mind, body, and soul, three spirit made some sense.

"Plus, if that's translated into the ancient language of the Northeastern Region, it would be the Ahaiyute Tree, which sounds pretty nice."

Damien knew quite a few languages. It turned out that devouring people's existences was a great way to stack up random skills.

[Ahaiyute Tree...I see. This is a good name.]

Luckily, it seemed the Ahaiyute Tree liked the name he gave it, so there wasn't a problem.

"If you want a specific name for yourself, it's better to pick that when you're more familiar with language. For today's purposes, this is enough."

He didn't want the tree to know, but it really was only a matter of convenience, since he really was getting tired of calling it "the tree."

Nevertheless, that wasn't something that anyone needed to learn. With names sorted out, Damien was ready to get into the main conversation.

"Katya, if you will."

The ice luan sighed. It was already an unavoidable thing, so there was no point complaining anymore.

"The information I am about to tell you is related to the Western Region, Arulion, the Kingdom of Dragons. I must make it clear before I say any more. None of this knowledge can be known to others. Even those closest to you."

According to Katya, the Dragon Clan had a method to find people who knew certain keywords that were not allowed to be spoken. If those people were found to be outsiders, they'd be killed without mercy.

Regardless of innocence or status.

Damien naturally understood, and he could easily bypass such a low-effort system, so he readily agreed.

With his affirmation, Katya sighed in relief and continued.

"Simply put, the Western Region is a completely different world compared to everything else. The borders you all see are illusions. The real border to Rulion cannot be crossed unless one has a sufficient amount of dragon blood."

Arulion was a society of its own, hidden in plain sight.

The Dragon Clan used the Western Region as the source of their power, but it was not their home.

It was a place for their home to connect to, so that the dragons could also come and go from the Heavenly World.

Their desire for isolation was more severe than anyone would have expected.

"Truthfully, I cannot tell you much about Arulion aside from the general facts. After all, the class system there is extremely strict. A half-blood like me...well, it's best to say that I didn't receive the best of treatment."

Damien could imagine it.

Dragons were a bipolar species. Half of them loved all people with dragon blood and tried to raise them up to the best of their abilities. Bai Yuxuan fell into this category.

As for the other half, they hated people who weren't pure dragons to the core. They believed those people had tainted bloodlines and were staining the image of dragons.

According to what Katya was saying, Arulion was led by the latter faction.

She went on to speak about what life was like in the cities, what kind of economies they had, and more before she reached a point where Damien started tuning in again.

"Ruling the kingdom is the dragon nobility. They are dragons with extremely pure blood and connections to Godbeast Ancestors."

"There are only 10 Godbeast Ancestors in the Dragon Clan now, but there were once over 16. They are the true rulers of the clan, and most importantly, they are the only ones with the qualifications to inherit the throne."

Damien's eyes narrowed.

Katya continued, as if to tell him that his thoughts were accurate.

"The six who no longer exist were killed for their qualifications, or so it was thought. As it appears, one of those six managed to find you, and for some reason, he trusted a human to carry his qualification."

A qualification to inherit the throne.

The throne of the entire Dragon Clan? Of dragonkind as a whole?

"What is the nature of that throne?"

Damien had to know.

But Katya only shook her head.

"I cannot tell you any more than this. To us commoners, the race for the throne was a mere legend, far too out of our sight that we could only imagine it. If you wish to learn more, or perhaps uncover the secrets that lay in that place, then you must visit Arulion."

Damien nodded slowly.

'The Azure Dragon...'

Did that senior truly want him to take over the Dragon Clan?

Or rather...

'I get it.'

[Azure].

It was a gift, but also a request for a favor.

After all, it didn't come alone.

Damien gained [Azure], and at the same time, he received an egg.

Neither had shown any sort of connection to each other until now, but that was because there wasn't one yet.

'[Azure] is my special card.'

And with it, he was to accomplish something insane.

'That senior was really expecting a lot from me.'

To think he would leave something that wouldn't be useful until the Heavenly World. It seemed the Azure Dragon had long predicted Damien's rise to power.

Still, regardless of the size of the favor, it was a favor Damien had to do.

Because it was a favor he was asked by someone who gave him everything in return.

'If I don't even repay something like that, then I'm really no better than a beast.'

A road to a new adventure had presented itself to Damien just as he finished one he thought would be no more than him going through the motions.

It was a trip worth more than he could have ever expected.

And now that he had both the information he wanted and the fruit he'd come for, it was almost time for him to return to Void Palace.

'Dante Void...'

A man Damien still couldn't quite convince himself to call "father."

'...I really hope this wakes you up.'

Chapter 1537 Confrontation [1]

Damien's conversations with the Ahaiyute Tree and Katya weren't over yet.

Well, he gained all the information he wanted from them, but conversations didn't exist just to spread information between people, did they?

Damien remained for the rest of the day before he even had thoughts of leaving.

Katya hadn't seen people ever since she left Arulion to seek her true origins. As for the Ahaiyute Tree, it was even more socially isolated.

He taught the tree how to properly use its knowledge, and in return, the tree continued to question him about things he never thought about, opening new paths for him to explore.

His time in the Frostbound Mountain Range was good for him. The chilling atmosphere made him feel present in his own body, and the curiosity in his soul burned bright, warming him and igniting his imagination.

Perhaps it was because this place was so isolated from society that Damien found a moment to think like this.

He had been surrounded by people for a very long time, after all.

Ice Luan Mountain was lively. In the mornings, the luans would fly through the sky and create beautiful scenes of falling frost.



The creatures that had adapted to this cold environment treasured each other, and despite the need they had to kill each other to survive, they respected their peers and didn't needlessly slaughter.

It was a balanced ecosystem, a peaceful one.

But Damien...he was never someone who considered himself a peace lover.

Usually, if he stayed in a peaceful environment for too long, he would start to feel restless. The chaos comforted his busy mind, filling it with thoughts.

Damien hated silence. He hated when his thoughts were left alone to run wild. It wasn't as if he was still plagued by mental problems, but he still remembered those days when his thoughts would cause him more pain than anyone else ever could.

That was why he didn't like the silence, even to this day.

Was the fact that he could find happiness in this peace a good thing?

Did it mean he was finally getting rid of the lingering effects of those times?

Or did it just mean he was jaded, disillusioned, and unwilling to deal with the world's troubles?

Damien didn't know.

He hardly felt anything. Not just in this moment, but in general.

His emotions, which had always been reserved only for the people he cared for, were no longer able to be excited by anything else.

It was his fault that he'd become like this.

'I feel numb.'

But that numbness was only temporary. Just like everything else, it would one day fade away as he found something new to replace it.

'Life is...long.'

But that longevity meant that he could take the time to explore anything and everything to the deepest depths. He could experience just as many wonders as he did tragedies.

'Even in people, there is so much variation.'

If he just made a single choice differently than he usually did, would that completely change the dynamics of the people he interacted with?

This was the curiosity he'd gained on Ice Luan Mountain.

And aside from the Harmony Fruit, it was the thing he was most excited to take down the mountain with him.

'It's about time to leave now, isn't it?'

He'd made a connection with Katya and the Ahaiyute Tree. He'd achieved his goal. And he'd even gained something more.

He didn't have to wait to go down the mountain.

True, he was a little sad to part with this atmosphere, but all good things had to come to an end.

For this one...

That end would come far sooner than Damien realized.

Because he'd made a mistake during his climb.

And now, he had a target on his back.

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Damien knew he was being watched, but he didn't know he was being watched for more than one reason.

For the most part, the enemies he had in the Heavenly World wanted to kill him because he was the one currently leading Void Palace.

With his death, they could destroy the palace's morale and gain an advantage against their troops.

Some had personal grudges, while for others it was more complex.

For a certain force, however, the reason for observing Damien was different.

The Foreign Races in the hidden principality, led by Grand Duke Famas, had been watching Damien because he was the son of Dante Void.

They expected him to have mysterious powers and abilities beyond others simply because of his bloodline, but they were always watching to make sure those abilities weren't out of the scope of their perception.

And, while Damien was an important target for them, he wasn't the most important.

What they were looking for was an "anomaly."

They didn't have a lot of information. The Dark God only told them that he sensed something strange, a presence that didn't match anything else.

The Dark God sensed that presence first in Count Verex's territory, but he didn't tell his people that.

After all, it didn't matter. That presence had moved to the Heavenly World, and if it appeared again, he would sense it again.

Naturally, the Dark God wasn't a being who cared about his subjects much.

And on top of that, since they'd always succeeded, he didn't think there was a chance for them to fail in finding the anomaly.

The Foreign Nobility thought this would be the first time they disappointed their Lord, because no matter how much time had passed, they couldn't find a trace of anything "unnatural."

Even the unnatural events and characters were merely a little better than the rest. In the grand scheme of things, they didn't mean anything.

So the Foreign Nobility were a bit on edge, using the most of their ability to find any clues possible.

That was the state they maintained at all hours of the day.

It would have been odd if they didn't find it.

A signal from the Frostbound Mountain Range, a trace of something that "should not have existed."

Existence itself.

Damien used its abilities when he met Envy. It was only for a brief moment, but it was enough to confirm that "something" in the Frostbound Mountain Range was the source.

Only the Grand Dukes were able to find something strange. They had the Dark God's blessing, so they could tap into a percentage of his perception ability to search for anomalies.

And when they confirmed the location...

Another piece of news they'd learned because they were keeping track of a certain man made it to Grand Duke Famas' ears.

"Damien Void is in the Frostbound Mountain Range."

The man who had isolated himself in his iron fortress for years had finally come out?

And the moment he came out, a clue was found in the location he traveled to?

Only an idiot wouldn't be able to connect the dots.

Grand Duke Famas had a large grin on his face when he received the information.

The man he wanted to kill, and the anomaly he was tasked to destroy...

They were either one and the same or closely related.

And if that was the case, then...

"Do not waste any more time."

...there was no need to hesitate.

"Send a party to the Frostbound Mountain Range, and before the sun rises over the sky..."

"...eliminate Damien Void."

#### Chapter 1538 Confrontation [2]

The Foreign Nobility worked fast. The moment they found a tangible clue about their target, they grabbed it and refused to let go.

A party was created to make its way to the Frostbound Mountain Range within minutes.

None of the Grand Dukes moved. They couldn't.

After all, they currently had the Heavenly World severely underestimating their forces. If a Grand Duke went out and showed his power, wasn't it practically like screaming, "Hey, look at us! We're dangerous!" to the entire world?

The time hadn't come for them to completely reveal their strength. That time would only arrive when they finally struck the planet.

Until then, they had to make sure that the general populace would never have a reason to be concerned with them.

One Duke, four Counts, and ten Viscounts set out, their skin and features disguised to look like humans.

Since they were already in the Northern Region, it didn't take long for them to arrive at the Frostbound Mountain Range, and since they had no interest in peace, it took them even less time to get to the periphery of Ice Luan Mountain, where the signal was the strongest.

Duke Horacio, who led the group, held in his hand a device that had a simple function.

It would take the information given to it, which, in this case, was the location of the signal, and pinpoint the exact position from which the signal was coming from.

The Foreign Nobility were experienced in the art of tracking anomalies. There would never be a time during the hunt when they arrived unprepared.

Even now, Duke Horacio was leading an advance party. Their job was to observe Damien, dial in on whether he was the target or just a related individual, and then relay the gained information back to the main base.

Yet, this advance party was led by a God with 4 other Gods under his command. Even the weaklings who were only there as a precaution were above the level of Divinity.

After all, if they came to blows with the target regardless...

Wasn't it better for them to be fully prepared?

Damien may have been powerful, but he wasn't at the level of a Grand Duke. The party sent to find him was more than enough for that purpose.

And find him they did.

Damien was relaxed. He wasn't trying to hide his position that much, but he also wasn't outwardly displaying it.

The problem was that the last known location of his signal was within the cave, when he gifted the Ahaiyute Tree Alaric's memories.

The cave itself was never hidden, and while Duke Horacio's party didn't have any reason to confront those living within...

They observed from the outside, and they caught the exact moment when Damien left.

And almost comically so, that single moment was all they needed to confirm their suspicions.

After all, the first thing Damien did, as always, was cover himself in a barrier of Existence and teleport.

Unfortunately for him, this was one of the unique cases where his use of Existence could be sensed by the other party.

And it was the worst possible situation for him.

"Go. Create a barrier."

By Duke Horacio's command, the ten Demigods formed a perimeter around a large area with Ice Luan Mountain in the center.

From ice wall to ice wall and spanning several thousand kilometers in all directions, a massive barrier was formed.

It was invisible, and rather than being powered by the mana of Demigods, it borrowed the mana of Gods, using those Viscounts as nothing more than poles through which it focused its power.

It was an incredibly subtle maneuver.

However, Damien immediately felt the difference.

'Someone's...here.'



His eyes narrowed.

He didn't sense any hostile presences or anything concerning for that matter. If he had, then he wouldn't have been moving so casually.

The creation of this barrier obviously meant that someone else was here, and even more obviously meant that they were after him.

After all, there was nothing else in this section of the Frostbound Mountain Range that required this level of preparation to face.

WHOOOOOOOOSH!

Damien rapidly dodged to the right. Out of nowhere, a massive rush of wind tried to strike him from behind and throw him off balance.

There was originally a doubt of it being a natural phenomenon, but when Damien's eyes focused in on the torrent itself...

'That's a person.'

He immediately recognized a humanoid form within the formless winds.

WHOOOOOOOOSH!

WHOOOOOOOOSH!

WHOOOOOOOOSH!

Three more from three different sides.

Damien's eyes widened as he focused his senses. He dodged minutely to the right, dodging the first, flicked his body in the other direction, dodging the second, and finally, jumped to dodge the third.

His body had turned semi-corporeal in that moment, as if he was disconnected from reality. The arms that reached out of the wind to grab him were not able to find their target, but once Damien was above them...

Nothing would stop him from finding his.

BANG!

He flipped his body and slammed his entire weight down on the third gust of wind, nailing the one inside straight in the center of their back.

They crashed to the ground, and without giving them a moment to rest, Damien grabbed their hair and pulled their head out of the ground.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

His hand exploded ten times in a row, filling the being's orifices and pores with rampant mana and burns. It wasn't enough to actually injure someone of this level, but it was more than enough to buy half a second while they were in a daze.

By the time that half of a second was over, Damien was already gone. He'd made distance and placed himself in a position where all four of his enemies were in front of him.

'They're not human.'

They looked human, but with the look he'd just gotten at that person, he could confirm that they were not.

Their souls were black. Not like his, more like they'd been tinted in something horrific.

This kind of soul...

'Only one type of being could possess it.'

He knew that for a fact, because he'd devoured one before.

"So you are that man's son."

A voice came from behind him.

Damien's head whipped to the side and his eyes made up the rest of the difference. He couldn't turn his back on the four in front of him because of this hidden fifth.

In his peripheral, he caught the form of a white-skinned man with bright emerald eyes and sharp brows. He looked somewhat heroic, but at the same time, he looked like a demon.

"Foreign Race."

"It is quite the offensive title you humans have given us, but I will admit. I am impressed by your deductive reasoning."

Duke Horacio didn't make any attempts to hide it.

Damien's moves just now were fast, but they weren't enough to actually cause harm to any of those four Counts that attacked him.

With the four of them and him, a Duke, combining their power, there was no way for Damien to escape.

He was assured of it.

So he happily stepped out of the air, revealing his presence to the enemy.

"Damien Void," he said, a mysterious smile on his face.

"I am afraid you will have to come with us. Whether you do that the easy way or the hard way..."

VOOOOOOOM!

Duke Horacio unfurled his aura, causing cracks to form in the mountain below.

"...well, that is completely up to you, isn't it?"

Chapter 1539 Confrontation [3]

Damien's face was currently decorated with a massive frown.

Foreign Races, and ones that wanted to capture, not kill.

Damien was already irked that they'd managed to surround him without him sending them.

The fact that they had some sort of plan that he didn't know about, one that somehow related to him, was even worse.

Judging from their auras, they were all Gods. That didn't worry Damien, but it made it difficult for him to kill and devour one to find information.

With Duke Horacio trying to make a conversation out of things, Damien was given a moment to thoroughly understand his situation.

'Those four...same level as the other Count.'

No, they were definitely stronger, but to the current Damien, they might as well have been at Count Verex's level.

'It won't be hard even if there's four of them.'

Damien was currently ignoring a yapfest from Duke Horacio, but from what made it into his ears, he was saying something about capturing him and eliminating him.

'Anomaly?'

That was the only word that stood out, but Damien didn't really care about it right now.

'How do I get out of this?'

The first thing he did was check his connection with the Sanctuary.

'As always.'

It was cut off. But this time, the reason was more tangible.

The barrier that enveloped the wide area around him was the only reason why his connection with any and all outside worlds was gone.

That also meant that as long as he broke the barrier, he'd be able to escape easily.

'That's a viable plan.'

Fighting them all and winning might've been possible, but he couldn't do it without causing an unnecessary commotion.

'Judging from the strength of this party, they've relatively guessed my strength level. It's fine if it's been revealed to the Foreign Races, but until I'm certain that Straea knows as well, I can't take risks.'

It was a rare time when Damien was lacking information. Without it, he was unable to move as he pleased.

Still, a direct confrontation that led to a massive battle that destroyed the entire Frostbound Mountain Range wasn't what Damien wanted right now.

That could wait for another time.

Right about now...

Duke Horacio stopped talking. Looking into Damien's eyes, it was clear that the man had stopped listening a long time ago.

"Nevertheless, Damien Void, come with us nicely. Do not force me to do something I really want to do."

Duke Horacio had a large smile on his face. This was an assured victory in his book.

That was why he continued to get closer to Damien, despite the dangers of approaching an enemy.

He didn't care if he lost his advantage, because he didn't believe that his advantage could be lost.

Was that a flaw?

Not necessarily, since, in a sense, he was correct.

However, that didn't mean Damien wouldn't try to exploit it.

Duke Horacio took another step.

Damien's eyes flickered.

'Now.'

His ultimate goal was the barrier, but he couldn't let the enemy know that.

He planted his foot in the ground and drew upon his mana. Not that of Existence, but that of the countless laws he'd practiced to perfection over his lifetime.

His choice in this moment was Cosmic Duality, the combination of Creation and Destruction.

The two laws didn't combine well. Unlike their lesser counterparts, Creation and Destruction were more like two sides of the same coin, rather than two agents that blended together perfectly.

It was hard to combine them at all. That combination didn't even have a name. "Cosmic Duality" was the system's attempt to create one for the otherwise unseen phenomenon.

So what kind of moves could Damien make with such a combination?

The answer was actually something terrifying.

A power that could both create and destroy in one breath?

That was simply a recipe for disaster.

The creation of force and its immediate destruction would create an impossibility, a situation where energy was truly destroyed, leaving only emptiness.

That phenomenon erupted right in front of Duke Horacio's face, and whether one was there to witness it or not, anyone could agree that it wasn't fun for the man at all.

There was no sound. The sound that would have been there was consumed by the created vacuum.

Even sound from the surroundings was sucked in like it was a black hole.

All of a sudden, the space within the barrier went absolutely silent.

And within the second, all that silence filled itself again.

ROOOOAAAAAAAAR!

The pure amount of sound coagulated into a furious roar that rocked the eardrums of all those present.

The 4 Counts and 10 Viscounts didn't even know what happened.

Only Duke Horacio saw that phenomenon.

And his eyes widened into saucers as he realized what was about to hit him.

A thick barrier of malakh immediately surrounded his body, blocking him away from the outside world.

It was a solid defense, especially since it was put up in a split second.

However, it wasn't enough.



BANG!

The phenomenon struck Duke Horacio's chest. Despite the lack of sound, the Duke felt like he could hear the impact resounding in his ears.

His chest caved in, and he was sent flying. Black blood flew out of his mouth as he gritted his teeth.

It was only a single instant, but Damien had made his stance clear.

"So you've chosen the hard way."

Duke Horacio wiped the blood from the side of his mouth, ignoring the cacophonous roar reverberating through the air.

"Then the hard way it is."

He was more than happy to fight.

VOOOOOOOOOM!

Malakh flooded the atmosphere. It was unnatural in the Heavenly World, so the instant it appeared, the Heavenly Order reacted.

Duke Horacio didn't care. The barrier was in place half to keep Damien contained and half to keep the Heavenly Order out.

It couldn't stop him from doing what he wanted to do as long as he was inside.

Malakh functioned differently from mana. The Foreign Races' power was the same.

Just as the Nox relied on Demonic Providence to fight more than law, the Foreign Races had a similar concept.

Each and every one of them had a unique power that was somewhat derivative of law.

In Duke Horacio's case, this power was something akin to telekinesis, though, at a far higher level.

The instant he raised his arm, the never-ending blizzard paused in place. The snow and ice that usually raced through the air became blades under the Duke's control.

Their target was clear.

Damien frowned, glancing around as his environment became an enemy.

'Four behind.'

They still hadn't moved, but they were getting ready to. He could sense it in their body movements.

'One in front.'

Duke Horacio may have been controlling the air, but his body was still ready and able to attack alongside the wide-area maneuver he had prepared.

'Ten in the surroundings.'

Those ten were upholding the barrier. Damien managed to sense them through the attack he'd sent out earlier. They were his main targets.

'Okay.'

It was only a brief moment, but while he thought, it was slowed to the point where it felt like minutes had passed by the time he was done.

The situation was not uncontrollable.

That was all that mattered.

He'd taken note of it all.

And once he had...

Time sped up to its normal pace.

And all those attacks that were being prepared a moment ago were sent out in unison.

BOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

Chapter 1540 Confrontation [4]

BOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

Damien teleported to avoid the attacks.

He arrived at the side of the barrier, but Duke Horacio was already following him.

With his control over the surrounding snow and ice, he had an absolute awareness of his surroundings. Even the slightest of spatial fluctuations could be sensed by him.

BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!

Damien put up several lens-shaped barriers. Infused with the power of Vector Control, they bounced back the debris that was hurling towards Damien at untold speeds.

BOOOOOOOM!

Taking the opportunity while he was busy blocking the Duke's attacks, the four Counts sped into range and attacked as well.

Damien gritted his teeth, his eyes flickering between them.

Count Verex's memories were helpful, but only to an extent. When it came to Dukes like Horacio, Verex knew as much as Damien did. The Dukes weren't people Counts could casually interact with.

It was different for other Counts. They were his direct competition, so Verex knew more about them than even they knew about themselves.

'Count Telebris, Count Zeas, Count Yuta, and Count Vettel.'

They weren't the best of the Counts, but they were all much stronger than Verex.

Their unique specialities all worked together, as they all had wind-related powers. That was why they could all attack and make it seem like the same attack was being thrown from all sides.

That was a misunderstanding. Their attacks may have looked the same, but each one had a different aim. If one was careless and assumed they were all the same, one would be severely injured without the ability to resist.

Well, that was the case for others.

Damien had no fear of the Counts. Not just because they were weaker than him, but also because they weren't his goal from the start.

He bent his knees and shot into the air.

The four Counts chased him, while Duke Horacio continued to impede him using the environment.

Damien's eyes were sharp.

Flying through the air was impossible right now. If he tried, he'd be torn to shreds by everything in the air trying to destroy him.

Damien was able to move because he could teleport.

No, rather, he was able to survive because of his connection to the spatial layers.

If he hadn't been able to turn his body ethereal, it would've been impossible to survive a telekinetic whose level was this high.

This was a moment where precise calculation was more important than feeling.

Damien had to teleport in short distances so he could throw off his pursuers, but he couldn't be out of the spatial layers for too long either.

Every time he entered a spatial corridor, he was already calculating how far he'd go with the next one and which direction he'd move in.

Damien led his enemies on a wild goose chase within the contained area they'd created.

Up and down, side to side, randomly changing even the orientation of his body, Damien did every possible thing he could to confuse them.

And it was working.

The Counts weren't as invulnerable as he was. Duke Horacio had great control, but he couldn't help it if the Counts ran into his attacks because they were chasing Damien.

Count Telebris was the most wounded. He was the fastest, and no matter how Damien moved, he was always on his tail.

However, that meant when Damien teleported, he took the brunt of the impact that was avoided by his target.

Damien took note of the man.

'He's easy to kill.'

That would come in handy later, but for now...

'I've pretty much understood how the barrier works.'

Damien was certain he could destroy it.

That was the only reason he'd been wasting so much time. He had to find the correct way to destroy the barrier in the least amount of time possible.

That solution was now found.

Damien teleported high into the sky, finding the apex of the barrier.

He brought his hands together, concentrating mana between them.

Time slowed down again.

A force stronger than ten thousand nuclear bombs appeared in that tiny area, and as Damien pushed his hands forward...

It touched the barrier and lost its balance.

BOOOOOOOOOOM!

The impact reverberated off the barrier and spread between the 10 Demigods holding it up.

They shared the damage with their bodies, which allowed the barrier to keep functioning, however, after a blast like that...

Five of them directly coughed up blood, while the other five wavered, struggling not to kneel.

BOOOOOOOOOOM!

Damien let off another blast. He gritted his teeth as Duke Horacio's projectiles cut through his skin and bones.

His body was ragged, but it wasn't enough to break him.

The five Demigods who managed to avoid injury last time also coughed up blood. As for the five that were already injured, they were immediately incapacitated.

The barrier fluctuated wildly as its form lost stabilization. The five remaining Demigods did their best to share the burden between them and keep it up, but that would only work if Damien decided to give up on them.

Duke Horacio was approaching him from below. The four Counts had attacked from the sides to make sure Damien couldn't dodge.

It was either he broke the barrier now, or he got hit with that attack.

Between those two choices...

The one he picked was obvious, right?

Damien's body was illuminated by a huge outpouring of mana. Space and Time warped, Life and Death froze, and Destruction pushed into the fluctuating barrier, transferring all of Damien's possible force into it.

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

The explosion sounded the same, but it was completely different.

This time, the Demigods didn't stand a single chance.

BANG!

BANG!

BANG!

BANG!

One by one, the Demigods exploded into clouds of blood mist.

The barrier went down almost instantly, giving Damien free reign over his position.



He glanced around him.

Four Counts and a Duke...

They were fast, but not faster than him.

And now that he had freedom...

'Let's do it.'

Damien teleported.

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

All the attacks aimed at him struck each other as he vacated his position. They exploded, creating a pressure wave that pushed even Duke Horacio back.

This was the perfect opportunity for Damien.

He appeared out of thin air behind Count Telebris and grabbed the man's neck.

The only reason he was strong was because he was in a group.

Isolated like this...

He was nothing more than prey.

BANG!

Damien squeezed his neck, instantly crushing it into bits.

A chaotic rampage of mana shot through Count Telebris' systems, breaking them down one by one.

And right before he died, he saw an unknown blackness covering his body and soul, dragging him into a dark abyss.

Duke Horacio, Count Zeas, Count Yuta, and Count Vettel all saw it happen, but they didn't have time to react.

Because by the time Count Telebris died...

Damien was already looking at Duke Horacio.

No, rather, did he just...wink?

Whatever the case, that was the last they saw of him.

He disappeared again as if he'd teleported, but no matter how many seconds passed, he didn't reappear.

Duke Horacio gritted his teeth, pulling out the signal locator that had zeroed in on Damien.

It only helped him confirm the conclusion he'd already made.

"He's gone."

Damien had escaped.

"DAMMIT!"

Duke Horacio roared in anger. It wasn't that they'd underestimated the opponent's strength. Instead, the problem was that they underestimated his durability.

Now that he was gone...

"Return to the hidden base expeditiously. We must report this to the Grand Duke."

Duke Horacio didn't wallow in defeat for too long. He internalized this moment, so that it would never be repeated in the future.

All they could do now was move forward with their plans.

After all, they'd confirmed it.

Damien was the anomaly.

Which meant that the moment Duke Horacio made it back to Straea...

All possible resources would be mobilized to eliminate him.