

Void 1591

Chapter 1591 Catch [1]

Grand Duke Maveth never once approached the action.

He was the first to sense Damien, as he was the current strongest Noble. However, even then, he remained hidden behind countless walls as if he was the weakest.

Why?

Was it because his mind was better than his strength?

No.

Maveth did have a great mind. He was able to create technological systems like the drones that blanketed the world in search for Damien after glimpsing similar technology in the True Void Universe.

The Sacred Abyss Universe didn't have anything of the sort as precedent, so Maveth could only be considered a genius.

Still, his strength was his best asset. Maveth trained from his youth as a warrior, not an intellectual. His mind was just an added plus, a talent he could use to further boost his true power.

But that left the question unanswered.

Why did Grand Duke Maveth seem to fear direct combat in this instance?

The truth was, he didn't.

Maveth was just like his peers. He had absolute confidence that he could defeat Damien if they fought in single combat.

He'd done it before, hadn't he?

Damien underestimated his pain amplification power, but that was because he didn't realize how fast things could get bad.

Maveth squared the pain. He didn't just double it. If he had hit Damien with even one more attack, perhaps he wouldn't have been able to find a way to escape.

His reason for staying back was different.

This wasn't battle. This wasn't a personal grudge. This wasn't something that required respect or emotion in any form.

This was a hunt for prey. It was the elimination of an anomaly, a process that was highly streamlined.

Damien had shown them too many mysteries. He was dangerous and cunning. If they didn't properly understand him before attacking, they would lose.

This had been proven over and over again.

First, he escaped them in the Heavenly World. Then, when he came to the Sacred Abyss, he humiliated them endlessly.

The Barons, Viscounts, Counts, and even Dukes were inconsequential.

However...

'...I am the last remaining Grand Duke.'

Grand Duke Lance's life signature had already vanished, while the chaotic explosion still continued to rage.

As for Klaus...

Huge beams of orange chaotic energy splashed out of geysers that formed on the dark beast's shell.

At the same time, an ear-shattering bang rang out. Klaus managed to pierce the turtle's shell, creating a path to its fleshy inner body.

Unfortunately, his timing was off.

BOOOOOOOOOOM!

Those waves of chaos crashed down on his barrier like a tsunami. Instead of pursuing the opening he'd made, Klaus was forced to block with all of his power.

BOOOOOOOOM!

BOOOOOOOOM!

BOOOOOOOOM!

Chaos was a terrifying force. It had no meaning, no rhyme or reason behind its actions. Chaos would do as it pleased, and everything else was forced to cope.

The force of that bizarre independence was hard to hold, especially when using another force close to chaos.

Malakh was a darker energy in its essence, so it naturally felt subordination to the dark beast's energy.

Mana, on the other hand, was a more orderly power. It would've had a far better chance in the current situation.

But Grand Duke Klaus could not use the energy of the True Void Universe, and that was only one of many reasons that led to his eventual defeat.

The dark beast's use of true chaos was the turning point. From the moment Damien saw it happen, he knew the battle was over.

Maveth was the same.

He was the last Grand Duke from that moment. Because only a minute later, Klaus broke under the weight of the dark beast's onslaught.

As his body fell through the air, limp and lifeless, another shadow appeared.

Maveth stood up, his eyes trained on the projection of those events that he was watching as they happened.

Damien grabbed the dying body of that man.

'He isn't dead yet. His soul is still alive.'

His body was finished, but he was trying to escape in his ethereal form so he could live again.

"Unfortunately, that's not happening."

Pitch-black energy surrounded Damien's body and enveloped the body of his enemy. It ate, crunching the Grand Duke into a wave of essence and existence that showered its owner.

Damien glanced down at the dark beast below.

Its eyes were also trained on him.

He used his energy, and it instantly snapped out of its frenzy.

That energy...

'That is the energy...!'

This was the true culprit behind its kidnapping.

"I'm sure you've realized it by the look in your eyes. I'll say the same thing to you. Unfortunately, it's not happening."

The dark beast's eyes were filled with malice and vengeance, however, Klaus had served his purpose.

He created the opening that Damien needed.

And when the dark beast's defenses were gone, when Damien could see its weaknesses with his naked eyes...

'Die.'

...it was done.

Existence rallied at his call and shot into the hole in the dark beast's shell.

It struck the fleshy body beneath and infected it, eating away at the great being. Existence was a very useful power, because Damien could do anything he wanted.

Since he wanted that beast to die, his power found a way to kill it.

BOOOOOOOOOOOM!

It appeared out of nowhere.

From the top and the bottom of the dark beast's body, a beam of pure white energy burst forth, slamming into the ground below and the sky above.

The dark beast was pierced by a Godly force. Its shell exploded along with its insides, leaving a gaping hole in its body that was big enough to house a nation.

'It's like an Achilles heel.'

Because every other part of its body had been fortified to the point where even Klaus could barely damage it, the body the beast hid inside of its shell was incredibly fragile.

The dark beast died, its body crashing to the ground and deepening the chasm it created by another margin.

Damien watched it from the sky, and...

"Kahak!"

He coughed out a mouthful of blood.

"Hak!"

Another.

"Hak!"

Another.

"Hak!"

At this point, he was practically vomiting organs.

His face turned pale and his body wobbled in the sky. Soon enough, it looked like he couldn't take it anymore.

Damien started to fall, desperately reaching out.

BOOM!

His body crashed into the ground, but...

As it turned out, he'd managed to recall the corpse of the dark beast into his storage.

'But even with that, he is severely injured.'

It was too much for him to mess with Klaus' soul and then try to kill the dark beast. Even if he had incredible power, it was too much for him to think he was a real God.

'Ever since he got here...'

He'd been using trick after trick, evading everything even when he could've easily fought.

'He is not a coward.'

But he was aware of his limits.

That was Maveth's final assessment of Damien Void.

'He'll be going into hiding again now.'

Until he recuperated, Damien wouldn't show his face, and as had been proven over the past year, they wouldn't be able to find him.

Which meant...

'...we have to act now.'

No, there was no longer a "we."

Maveth had to end this himself and eliminate the anomaly while he had the chance.

He had to join the battle.

Chapter 1592 Catch [2]

'That should be what he's thinking, right?'

Damien was able to easily read the flow of Maveth's thoughts, because he was the one who created it.

Maveth's carefulness had been slowly broken down by Damien's schemes. The dark beast and Grand Duke Klaus just served to perfectly wrap everything up and absolve the rest of his doubts.

Damien needed to find a way to keep up his facade while reaping all of the benefits of the plans he set up.

When Klaus died, Damien was able to sneakily devour him because Maveth didn't know what devour was. If the dark beast disappeared the same way, then suspicions would arise.

As such, Damien coughed blood as if attacking Klaus and the dark beast required him to sacrifice something. As he fell, he acted desperate and used fluctuations of spatial mana to pretend he was storing its corpse, when he was actually devouring it whole.

Damien gained a lot from those two. Klaus didn't have as much to contribute since Damien didn't need more knowledge about the Foreign Races at this time, but there was definitely something interesting in his memories.

That was a story for another time, as was what Damien gained from the dark beast.

Power-wise, his pre-existing knowledge was strengthened to another degree, leading his control to improve yet again.

None of it really mattered to Damien. More than for his benefit, Damien devoured them out of habit, and...a little bit of another reason.

Nevertheless, with the performance he put on, the main goal of this operation had been achieved.

Damien stayed on the ground, collapsed and seemingly lifeless. Blood pooled in his mouth, and his eyes seemed hazy.

His head swung from side to side, his consciousness slipping from reality.

Maveth arrived in an instant. He was far away, but he could cover these distances easily in the Sacred Abyss Universe.

He glanced down at the ground, not approaching it just yet.

Damien felt an aura rinse over his body as Maveth scanned him with his awareness.

'The state he can gauge should put me somewhere near death.'

Damien tried his best. His insides really were a mess to keep up the illusion. Since Damien's body hardly relied on them anymore, he was able to destroy and rebuild them as he pleased.

His soul was also giving off incredibly weak fluctuations, which was the most important factor for a God to consider.

His entire image lowered Maveth's guard, even though his guard was supposed to be all the way down before he even arrived.

Damien could never be too careful.

He wanted Maveth dead. He didn't want to wait for a long time and slowly whittle him down. He wanted him dead right this instant.

For that, his current strength simply wasn't enough. Even if he fought, he would need days, months, or longer to bring Maveth close to death.

And that was if he could keep Maveth fighting for that long.

'I've gotten a lot stronger, but right now, the best strategy is still to use external force.'

Eventually, it would become completely irrelevant.

Unfortunately, that was not now.

It didn't matter how much Damien could dominate against people under the Supreme God level, did it?

His enemies were still above him.

Damien's cards didn't end with the ones he'd already used.

He didn't have a lot of Supreme level powers, so he had to carefully plan how he was going to obtain them and kill Maveth.

Malefice's essence killed Lance in such a way where Damien couldn't devour him, but Klaus was different.

As was the dark beast.

Damien only needed the memories of their existence and the essence of their Legends.

The actual power they'd built up...? Their law comprehensions, techniques, and pure energy...?

Since when did Damien need any of that from anyone else?

All of it had been stored, compressed, and morphed into an essence incomparable to its original form.

Everything that the dark beast and Klaus had accumulated was turned into power to be used against Maveth.

Damien truly didn't have any better use for it.

Why was it described in such detail...?

Everything was laid out so Maveth didn't get the chance to fight.

Pain amplification wouldn't be allowed to see the light, neither would force control.

None of Grand Duke Maveth's strength as a Supreme God would be exerted.

That was the perfect future Damien and envisioned, and one he assured would happen through extensive preparation.

Grand Duke Maveth approached slowly. He carefully set up a barrier around himself as he got closer to Damien, sending his energy out before him so he could test the waters.

Bzzt!

Damien's body was shocked by the malakh. His pain was immediately doubled, and his body jerked as if his nerves were being controlled by the electricity.

Maveth watched his limp body flop around and return to normal, though more rigid than before.

Bzzt!

He struck again. At four times the pain, Damien's body gave the exact same reaction, and his lifeless expression and lacking vitality didn't change in the slightest.

'Is he truly...?'

Maveth was close now.

'Just a few more feet...'

Damien waited patiently for his moment to strike.

BZZT!

Yet another strike. This one was far worse than its predecessors, a combination of several attacks in one.

Damien immediately returned to the mindless state he reached when he was trying to escape the hidden principality. All of the pain Maveth tried to inflict on him was pushed away, and his body was able to give the same natural reaction without giving anything away.

How could Maveth not be convinced at this point?

No proper living being should've been able to handle that much pain without even the slightest micro expression.

If Damien was truly in an almost deceased state, if he was truly only a breeze away from passing...

Grand Duke Maveth took the last step.

And Damien saw his opportunity.

His arm flashed out. It passed through Maveth's malakh barrier as if it didn't exist and grabbed hold of his leg.

"That's game."

It was a phrase that Damien was starting to like a lot.

His eyes connected with Maveth, and they both had the exact same thought.

'He got played.'

'I was fooled.'

Maveth had a flash of an instant to react, and to his credit, he did succeed in doing so.

He pulled away, ripped his leg out of Damien's grasp, and summoned his malakh to create a stronger barrier.

But...if Damien was relying on something as flimsy as needing to maintain contact, then he never would've implemented this plan in the first place.

No, the concoction he created had mounted itself on Maveth from the moment they touched.

A shining blue light pulsated under the skin of his shin, highlighting the veins and arteries hidden within.

It got brighter and brighter, alerting Maveth's attention too.

SHIK!

Feeling the chaotic energy, he severed his leg without hesitation.

But as Damien said.

It was already game.

He snapped his fingers with a smile as Maveth tried to retreat away from his leg.

He teleported away, getting clear of the expected blast radius.

And...

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

Damien watched as the world was showered in light.

And soon enough, he experienced an important fact directly with his body.

The "expected blast radius" was nowhere near reality.

Rather, it was the grossest understatement that could've possibly been made.

And it made sure to let everyone know exactly that.

Chapter 1593 Catch [3]

Malefice's core explosion was already big enough to be seen from the other side of the world, right?

Well, that explosion was soon dwarfed. It's golden-white light faded and was replaced by a bright blue color and even greater pressure waves.

Cracks formed across the entirety of the world's surface. Massive earthquakes and eruptions made the sky and ground extremely hostile, and the world itself cried as it was forced to experience brutal agony.

'Shit!'

Damien gritted his teeth as he used Existence to create multiple barriers that isolated him from the explosion.

'The world is going to collapse.'

He vastly underestimated his opponents, because he'd never fought them at their full strength. He created the explosive himself, but the fluctuations it gave off weren't chaotic enough to produce such horrific results.

'But order can also do something like this.'

Perhaps Grand Duke Klaus and the dark beast's energies found some sort of common ground and amplified each other.

Whatever the reason was, it held true that the world was going to die if this kept going.

'I don't even need to care about Maveth anymore.'

Damien had perfectly executed his plan. He had no doubt that the Grand Duke was already dead.

No, anyone and anything in the blast radius was dead.

There were no survivors.

Everyone was aware of how strong Damien was.

However, even he could only survive using Existence barriers.

Without that power, even with the Authority of Immortality, Damien would have died.

He would've been incinerated into nothingness before he could ever begin to regenerate.

Against that force...

'Damn!'

Damien put his arms out and spread his mana into the world, grabbing it and essentially pulling it back together.

He used the concept of order, desperately healing each and every crack that formed until the world had returned to one piece.

It was a tedious process, especially with a world of this size. Damien's perception was stretched to its limits, and he felt the world ripping apart as if it was his own body.

It was more painful because of that, but he also gained a more intuitive understanding of the flaws he needed to fix, which made his job easier.

Blue waves of energy continued to rush past him in the physical plane, unable to touch him. Damien bit down as hard as he could, concentrated all of his attention, and carefully made every necessary move until all of the necessary processes could be automated.

And finally, he had the chance to teleport away, delegating a portion of his consciousness to manage the adhesion.

Damien only got a true grasp of the blast's size when he left it.

If there was a way to describe it...it looked like the moon had collided with Earth, except in this case, the moon was a fiery ball of destructive blue energy.

'If I had known, I would've done this from the start.'

Damien put an Existence barrier around the area, just like he'd done with Lance.

He allowed the explosion to continue its rage, but he contained it within an area that it wasn't allowed to leave.

This way, even if Maveth somehow managed to survive, he would die before the force dispersed.

'It's a shame. He had a short run.'

It was like Maveth had taken control over his fellow Nobles just a few days ago, and he was already dead, along with all of the rest of them.

'Time really flies...'

Damien smiled to himself.

He let go of his mana as the world finally decided to stay together on its own.

And he looked down at his work with pride.

The blue star was a sign of his arrival here, a greeting to anyone who was concerned.

Those who once ruled this plane would not keep it for much longer.

It was his territory now, and would remain that way until the day he personally decided to let it go. Not one second earlier.

If anyone had a problem with that...

...then they could come see him about it, right?

A lot of the time after that was used for reorganization.

With Maveth, Lance, Klaus, and Famas dead, there was really no structure left in the Foreign Nobility.

Sure, the Dukes hadn't been targeted yet, but what could they do?

Even if they banded together, they never stood a chance against a Grand Duke.

Damien hadn't killed one, but three people of that caliber. Why would they try to challenge him now?

It was a misconception on their part. Damien was far stronger than an individual Duke, but if all 31 came together, then it would've been quite a difficult situation even for him.

Their fear, caused mostly by his deeds that were turned into fables by the time they reached their ears, was the cause of their undoing.

Damien once again did rounds around this world.

Since it didn't have a name...

'No, since it's mine now...'

He decided to name this world after his home cosmos. It was a simple name, but it was more than indicative of the world's purpose.

It was the True Void Universe's first success in conquering the Sacred Abyss.

When the True Void World eventually became a galaxy, then a universe, and then the cosmos itself, wouldn't it be far easier to combine the two if they shared the same name?

Nevertheless, to create a real "True Void World," Damien had to do more than just kill people.

He slaughtered all of the Dukes without fail, and within a few days, he started replacing them with his own people.

Duke Horacio made his return to this world, along with anyone else who had the potential to adapt to this cosmos' laws.

Damien still hadn't contacted Thalia and the rest, though, he was planning to visit after he finished claiming the rest of the world.

If it was people he met, then...

Just a little after he completed his Duke hunt, he went to the Sanctuary to consult Lynn and work out some plans for the new world.

At that time, he happened to run into someone quite special.

"Elena...?"

He was really just walking around on Theavel to enjoy the atmosphere of the now fully-bloomed world when he saw her at a food stand on the side of the street.

"Oh, you're here? I thought you'd gone away somewhere," Elena responded with a smile, causally waving him over.

It was a bit painful for him to realize how common his disappearances had become, but at the same time, he was happy his wives had enough trust in him to expect his return so firmly.

Damien sat down with Elena and ordered himself a snack.

"Why are you here? You never come to the Sanctuary."

"What about you?" Elena returned. "If you're here after something like that happened, then you must have some crazy scheme going on."

"Scheme is a little harsh, no?"

"Maybe."

Elena smiled.

"As for me, you know I don't like using this place as a cop out, but it still comes in handy as a final resort."

"You had to escape something that bad?"

"Yeah. It was pretty crazy."

"But you're okay, right?"

"Completely fine. I made it here in time and took a few days to heal. I'm about to head back, actually."

Elena let her words trail off, looking at Damien up and down.

Sure, he still looked handsome and well-kempt, but she could see the subtle scratches and tears on his clothing.

'Which is stupid, since his clothes are made of energy.'

Signs of wear on clothes made from his imagination could only appear if he was exhausted greatly.

"You're good too?" She asked, putting her hand on his.

Damien smiled without concern.

"Yeah, it's all good. At this point, the hard stuff is over with and all I need is a workforce, which is...a little harder now that almost everyone is in the Heavenly World."

"Hmm...temporary or permanent?"

"Both, and both need people who are adaptable and talented."

Elena nodded.

"If it's a temporary workforce, I can help. As for the people you need permanently...isn't it easy to get in contact with the others?"

Right, from the Sanctuary, Damien could easily contact those at the palace and gather the people he needed.

That was why he came, wasn't it?

However, it seemed he wouldn't have to do the tedious work.

Elena promised to take care of it in his stead, and after a little more conversation, she left.

Her story wasn't ready to be told yet, after all.

'I wish we could've spent more time together, but...oh well.'

He had things going on, and more importantly, for the first time in a while, Elena had things going on.

She was on an adventure that was clearly both dangerous and exciting for her, because he could feel it in her soul just how eager she was to get back in the field and continue exploring.

Their conversation was around an hour long, so in terms of small talk, they'd done enough of it to be satisfied. As for the more gritty things, they just didn't mention it.

This wasn't the time for them to get comfortable, after all.

Nevertheless, that meeting was the reason Damien started going in and out of the Sacred Abyss Universe with not only humans and other natural species, but also with an army of Valhalla souls.

The people were placed throughout the True Void World, assigned roles in many sectors to promote the world's growth.

Those who would lead the population from here on were hand-

picked by Damien himself, and with them at the head, he didn't need to worry about there being any problems.

With the arrangements made, he finally did what he'd been meaning to do since the moment he killed the last Duke.

All at once, Damien claimed ownership of every territory in this world, completely making it his own.

The world shined.

Damien's influence was immediately reflected, as the desolate atmosphere was filled with light and life.

Green, blue, and other colors melded with the natural reds and browns of the environment, creating a unique image in the eyes of the planet's denizens.

Even the most uneducated of them could tell that something massive was happening.

Whether that would be good or bad for them...?

Perhaps they'd only find out in the future.

But Damien chose his people well, and he wasn't someone who took pleasure in mistreating the common folk.

The True Void World would be treated like any other world under Damien's reign. The people would be given the same opportunities if they were able to take hold of them.

Because this was the seed of revolution.

This was the moment Damien's "Grand Merger" plan finally went into action.

Chapter 1594 Catch [4]

VOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

It was an endless drone.

It was inaudible in most places. The majority of the world's population would be unaffected by it until the day it died down.

But if anyone got close to it, they would hear that drone in their ears, never letting them forget that it existed.

Not that anyone could forget in the first place, since it was accompanied by a huge blue star that was continuously colliding with the planet's surface.

Damien stood in front of it with cold eyes.

BOOOOOOOM!

A wave of energy forced itself against the Existence barrier in front of him and splashed to the sides.

There were many bursts in many places, but none of them were as concentrated or powerful as this.

It wasn't alone either.

BOOOOOOOOOOOM!

BOOOOOOOOOOOM!

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

Over and over again in the same spot. After the first three, it was hard to keep thinking it was coincidence.

And if anyone managed to maintain that delusion after the fact...

BANG!

"DAMIEN VOID!"

A bloody fist slammed against the Existence barrier. The charred form of a man appeared on the other side like something out of a nightmare, staring into Damien's soul.

"LET ME OUT! LET ME OUT AND FIGHT ME, DAMIEN VOID!"

Split and drool splashed from Grand Duke Maveth's mouth as he screamed like a feral beast, only for it to be evaporated by the surrounding energy.

His fists were only half-present in their complete forms. The bottom of his right hand and the middle of his left were just bones, reinforced by malakh to stay together.

Damien had been coming here every so often since he flawlessly got rid of the three Grand Dukes. At first, it was just to look at the explosion, but around three months after the events transpired...

BOOM!

Grand Duke Maveth appeared for the first time.

Damien thought he was dead. There was no logical way for him to survive.

However, he was somehow managing to preserve his life in there.

His body was broken. His head was a skull dyed in blue and black. Seeing how his flesh shifted between nonexistent, charcoal, and normal was harrowing.

The proud appearance of a Grand Duke was no longer with him. The explosion ate his sanity just as much as it ate his life.

But he refused to die.

He used force control to keep the chaotic energy away from him, just barely managing to survive. He had to keep his ability active at all times or he'd be shredded.

The injuries on his body were the result of his many attempts to try and take a break. The moment he realized it was impossible, he went insane.

Now, he had devolved to this.

And Damien had come to visit him once a week to see how he was doing.

Maveth's willpower was definitely impressive. Damien didn't particularly enjoy watching the man suffer like this, but it had to be done.

He came here not for pleasure, but for the memories contained within that man's existence.

Maveth and Famas always stood above Klaus and Lance. None of them had direct contact with the Dark God, but the two of them were aware of his location.

Famas had long since died.

As for Maveth...

'Even though he looks like this, he's still too dangerous.'

Wasn't the fact that he'd been constantly expending copious amounts of mana for months and showed no signs of fatigue?

He was injured, but his vitality didn't decrease unless he relaxed his energy barrier, an action he was now refusing to take.

'He's getting more feral too. I don't want to find out what he can do with his power when he doesn't have rationality holding him back.'

Damien was waiting patiently for Grand Duke Maveth to become no more than prey waiting to be killed.

Until then, he had better things to do.

He was turning the True Void World into a sight completely different from its appearance a bit ago.

Technology boomed.

Well, that wasn't necessarily true. Damien brought a lot of technology over and brought even more experts who could develop and create such devices. With them, he was able to mimic a technological revolution.

It would take a long time for the denizens to learn the ways of such a society, but Damien was hoping that introducing them to these concepts beforehand would accelerate their growth.

His main focus was the environment itself.

He could directly influence it, and he could do so in a short period of time, so he put more of his attention towards this.

Grass was now a prominent thing. Crops could grow where they couldn't grow before, and new ecosystems almost immediately started developing.

The True Void World resembled the Heavenly World more and more by the day. Elena's Valhalla army was surprisingly efficient, so the societal development was turning out nicely as well.

His family already knew about what he was doing at this point.

Elena had communicated with them just as she'd promised, and they'd provided as much aid as they could without completely understanding what he was doing.

Nevertheless, as Damien continued to develop the True Void World and visit Maveth.

No, he secured the True Void World. It was more than just the world's growth. He made sure that nothing would be able to challenge its stability.

And as he drowned himself in work, that time came.

The last remaining Grand Duke's vitality hit an all-time low.

And Damien made his move.

He entered the Existence barrier to see Maveth on the ground, sprawled out as best he could with the remainder of his body.

He saw Damien approaching, and his aura instinctively flared in response. He tried to growl and hiss, but he no longer had the facilities to make sounds or express his emotions in any way.

Damien looked at him without any expression on his face.

This man made him suffer more than anyone else in the entire Heavenly World. As a result, his life was ending in suffering.

"Karma's a bitch."

Damien knelt down and put his hand on Maveth's head.

"Now, give me what I want."

From the start, he only had one purpose.

There was one man he wanted to meet.

And as Maveth's memories turned into essence that filled Damien's mind, he got the answer he wanted.

His eyes went up to the sky.

He snapped his fingers, and the Existence barrier shrunk over and over again until the entire remaining explosion was contained in a small ball.

Damien grabbed that ball in his hand. Pulling his arm back to gather power, he shot it into the sky at extreme speeds.

It broke past the True Void World. It broke past the extents of the star cluster where this world stayed. It broke past everything else in this cosmos and arrived at an isolated black hole that not a single person had seen with their own eyes.

That was where it decided to explode.

BOOOOOOOOOM!

The blue energy that ripped apart Grand Dukes like loose-leaf paper barely got to show its power for half a second before it was completely extinguished.

Damien never meant it as an attack, though.

No, to a being of that level, the explosion was nothing more than a greeting.

It was his way of clearing displaying that he recognized that man's presence.

The man in the center of the black hole opened his eyes slightly. His vision spread past the bounds of perception and located the man who called out for him.

They stood so many light-years away that it wasn't worth trying to measure the distance, but the two of them stared into each other's eyes without a hint of deviation.

Damien and the Dark God.

Wasn't it time for them to finally meet face-to-face?

Chapter 1595 Meeting [1]

That single strike told Damien a lot of things.

Mostly about the Dark God's strength.

Without a doubt, that man was too strong for Damien to face, but that didn't mean anything to him.

He stepped off the surface of the True Void World and into the cosmos beyond.

He swam through space and time, covering great distances with ease as he approached the Dark God.

It only took him a few minutes to reach the black hole.

[You have come.]

That voice rumbled through space. Damien's eyes narrowed as he felt the fluctuations contained within. They were familiar, but at the same time, incredibly different.

[Did you think yourself ready to come here?]

"Not in the slightest," Damien responded honestly.

The voice was still touching his soul, making him feel more than just uncomfortable. Still, Damien didn't show fear in front of this enemy.

He couldn't see the Dark God. He couldn't see anything beyond the massive cluster of energy that was disguising itself as a black hole.

That energy, and the voice projected through it, was the impression Damien had of the Dark God.

It was all dark, malevolent, and filled with violence. There was a feeling as if this being represented all of the hostility that existed in the world.

But more than that, Damien didn't feel anything.

'I know he's strong.'

It would be stupid to think otherwise. This was a man who could disperse an attack as strong as that explosion with ease that Damien could never replicate.

And he was familiar. There was never anyone else who felt this familiar.

'Existence, and...something more.'

As Damien looked into that darkness, he realized that he and this being were treading the same path.

Just, their progress was at two exceedingly different levels.

[Why have you come?]

The Dark God spoke again, continuing what he was saying before.

'But it's strange.'

Why did it seem like he didn't want them to meet right now? The Dark God...shouldn't he have been reveling in the chance to kill the anomaly that was blocking him from complete victory?

His emotions were unreadable, but Damien felt like the Dark God was completely different from his subjects.

'...and I don't know if that's a compliment.'

"You ask me why I'm here as if I have the answer. I just got curious, so I came."

[And you believed I would entertain you?]

"I did."

The fact that they had gotten this far was already enough proof.

The Dark God couldn't converse with people. Anyone who came as close as Damien would've been disintegrated already, while those who stood far enough to survive would die if they heard his voice directly.

Damien had Existence just as the Dark God did. He was able to meld into the aura that killed others and protect himself against the voice.

For the first time in a long time, there was someone the Dark God could talk to.

However, he was an enemy.

[You are a confident anomaly. None have ever dared to test my patience like this.]

"Have any ever dared to kill all of your followers?"

[Many. None of them still live.]

Arrogance.

It was a word that could be used to describe a lot of Damien's enemies, but none of them had it like the Dark God.

This was a man beyond Damien's scope of understanding. He was someone who'd traveled countless cosmos and conquered them, reigning over a number of beings that was simply uncountable.

That was why he was called the Dark God in a world where "Godhood" was no more than a milestone every practitioner aimed to reach.

He was the closest thing this world had to a true God.

[Are you curious?]

Damien already said he was, but he decided not to point that out.

[You are a fledgling, aiming to become like me. However, are you aware of anything? Will you be able to do it? And if you do...can you reach "that" step?]

The Dark God swarmed him with questions that he wasn't expecting to receive.

'What is he talking about?'

He was asking as if he didn't expect Damien to answer.

No, he was talking like Damien reaching his level or surpassing him was simply a pipe dream.

[Damien Void. You think I cannot know you.]

The darkness in the black hole swirled, expanding and contracting like the beating of a heart.

The Dark God's voice became louder, booming in Damien's ears.

[Your life is clear to me. As is your ambition. You have come here because you believe I will not kill you, and you are not wrong. However, do not mistake my actions for pity or weakness.]

VOOOOOOM!

Damien gritted his teeth and raised his arms in front of his face, splitting the wave of energy that flowed towards him.

[Did you believe you would gain something from me? Or were you wondering about what I am like as a person? Regardless, you are not worthy.]

It was strange.

The Dark God was definitely threatening, but it was as he said.

'Why don't I feel threatened?'

Damien knew it was stupid to come here. He knew that his enemy wouldn't entertain him or give him anything helpful.

But he was still drawn here. It was as if he had to come. Otherwise, he would infinitely regret it.

'Am I learning anything?'

Damien felt more nothingness from the Dark God than anyone else. He wasn't learning. It was more like his mind was losing function the longer they spoke.

[You killed them all.]

Damien's attention was drawn back to the Dark God. This was the first time he'd acknowledged what Damien had done to the True Void World.

[Are you trying to conquer my territory?]

Damien frowned.

"I am."

He was honest, since there was no point acting oblivious at a time like this.

[Is that why you are confident?]

Damien didn't say a word, but his answer was obvious.

Yes.

The reason he was confident enough to come face this being directly was because he had been able to accomplish so much in recent times.

He'd been able to escape when he needed to escape, and he was able to kill when he needed to kill. Damien found that Existence responded to him better if he just acted as he pleased without requiring justification, so that was what he did.

The cosmos rumbled. It was like...the Dark God was laughing?

[It seems you are yet to understand anything.]

Damien raised his brow in confusion.

[You have come for validation, have you not? You wish to see how your power can compare to mine.]

The black hole shifted with the Dark God's emotions.

[Very well. I will show you the levels you will not be allowed to reach.]

There was no sound, no great explosion of energy.

There was nothing. No phenomenon, no change, no difference.

But something did change, and something was different.

It was just that...

'...in that instant, he made something "exist"'

Damien didn't know what had been made, nor did he know where it was, but something had just been etched into Existence by the enemy. Even Damien would have to work hard to learn what to actually was.

And as if that wasn't bad enough...

'...he's not anywhere near done yet.'

Nothing was changing. There were no differences.

But Damien...Damien could feel it.

The Dark God was still doing "something."

He was messing with forces far, far beyond Damien's control.

Chapter 1596 Meeting [2]

This was what it meant to truly wield Existence, but it wasn't something that could be done with Existence alone.

The Dark God was able to affect the world while ignoring space and time. He was able to implement concepts into reality as if they've always existed, which was absolutely absurd.

The memories of all beings in contact with those concepts would be altered at an existence level, and the world itself would be rewritten to reflect the changes he made.

History itself would change. The way people remembered things would change.

For instance, if the Dark God wanted to alter things so that the Straea Clan still existed, then he could absolutely make that a possibility.

Why was Damien unable to do these things...?

It wasn't because he didn't have all six concepts of Existence yet. It was a level above that.

What Damien realized in that moment was the gap between them.

Because the Dark God was wielding Existence and Nonexistence fluently, changing all things as if they were nothing more than concepts to him.

Damien's eyes narrowed.

'I'm powerless.'

No matter how close he was to the Dark God, he couldn't do anything against this.

If a being like that wanted to wipe him from existence, would his family even remember him when he was gone?

It was a terrifying prospect, and exactly what the Dark God wanted to show him.

[Damien Void...]

His voice rumbled outward, as if cementing all the changes that were made.

[Do you pride yourself in the slaughter of the Nobles?]

It seemed like a genuine question that the Dark God wanted answers to.

If Damien had to answer honestly...

"No, not really, but it makes life a lot easier, doesn't it?"

The Dark God wouldn't be able to push forces into the Heavenly World anymore. Damien had bought himself time to rid the world of corruption and Foreign Territories before he eventually had to confront his main enemy.

Time was the most valuable commodity in existence, and Damien didn't feel anything like pride for earning more of it.

It was just what he had to do.

[That is good.]

The black hole waved, as if the Dark God nodded his head.

[If you are to become my enemy, then you cannot die to something like pride.]

"What...?"

Damien raised an eyebrow.

'Become...his enemy?'

As in, he wasn't qualified to be one yet, right?

[Do not be disappointed.]

The Dark God continued, patronizing Damien.

[If you cannot recognize basic facts, then you truly have no right to call yourself my enemy.]

Damien's frown deepened.

[Those Nobles you killed, that time you believe you have earned...]

VOOOOOOOOOOOM!

The Dark God released his mana, making sure Damien could feel the full extent of what he was facing.

[...they were never real.]

Those were the words that started armageddon.

In truth, no words were necessary for the Dark God to understand Damien.

He could read people's Existences, just like Damien. His ability was actually far stronger since he could look past the common Existence and see what "could not exist" as well.

Damien and managed to get this far because his true strength was always hidden. His trump cards were always in places the enemy could never see.

But the Dark God...

[I can see it all.]

[Your family, your Sanctuary, your energy, and...that force.]

He refused to say its name, but it was clear that he knew very well what it was.

[Damien Void, you are a threat that I cannot tolerate.]

His tone suddenly seemed far darker.

[If you are allowed to grow, then perhaps another version of "him" will be born.]

The energy raging in the surroundings began to coagulate, merging into several individual pieces.

[If you would have stayed in your own territory, perhaps I would have continued as always. Perhaps I would have waited another million years before waging war against this world.]

[Damien Void, I enjoy watching the suffering and tribulations of those who oppose me. I enjoy watching them fight to their greatest potential and still be defeated by my forces. I am not someone who loves mindless conquering.]

It was a bad feeling.

Whatever the Dark God's words were leading up to...

[However, I cannot take risks against a being with your growth potential.]

The black hole boomed. Suddenly, it possessed a suction force unlike any other black hole, capable of swallowing all of existence if it had the chance.

The "energy" in the surroundings, Damien had been able to feel it from the start, but he couldn't see it.

As of now, it had begun to form into shapes he could perceive. The shapes of...

'...people.'

Damien realized.

'...they were never real.'

That was what the Dark God meant.

It started with tens of figures. They became tens of thousands and then became millions. Those millions expanded until every last piece of the pitch-black starry sky was covered in them.

'4 Grand Dukes...'

Grand Duke Famas, Grand Duke Maveth, Grand Duke Klaus, and Grand Duke Lance.

They were familiar faces. Faces of people who had died.

'Another...'

Grand Duke Famas, Grand Duke Maveth, Grand Duke Klaus, and Grand Duke Lance.

There were eight of them now. Two of each.

And then there were sixteen.

Under those sixteen Grand Dukes, tens of thousands of Dukes, hundreds of thousands of Counts, millions of Viscounts, and too many Barons to count.

In a single instant, an army of Divinities had been formed in the Sacred Abyss.

[I shall give you five years.]

The Dark God's voice was like an omen of disaster.

As Damien heard it, it sent shivers down his spine, striking genuine fear in his heart.

He wasn't afraid for his own life. Instead...

[In five years, I will come. Either you raise your territory and fight back, or...]

Nothing more needed to be said.

Against a force like this, unless Damien was able to perform a miracle on a similar scale...

'...the True Void Universe is finished.'

Damien's eyes slightly widened. His gaze was pulled a into the swirling black hole.

It's darkness parted, giving way to a pair of eyes that Damien felt like he both could and couldn't see.

As his eyes locked with them, he heard that voice again. This time, clearly in his ears.

"I look forward to your efforts."

Damien opened his mouth, wanting to say something, anything at all, but...

He could not.

He did not have the chance.

There was no fluctuation in space. There was no shift in the dimension.

However, Damien could feel it as his environment suddenly replaced itself with another.

'I'm...back in the Heavenly World.'

He didn't know where he was, but the atmosphere was filled with mana, not malakh.

Damien didn't even take the time to search his surroundings.

His body instinctively released an Existence barrier, and he collapsed against the tree behind him.

Nothing else mattered right now.

Where he was, what he was doing, all of that could be put aside.

Right now, Damien just needed to sit down.

That interaction...

It wasn't just about the power the Dark God displayed, nor was it just about the time limit that being had given him.

Everything about that meeting, from what happened to what didn't, from what was sensed to what wasn't, from what "existed" to what "didn't."

Damien needed to take a moment to register it all.

Chapter 1597 Awakening [1]

That moment was a lot more significant than Damien realized.

The Dark God influenced the world greatly when he exerted his force. Things changed, though nobody was able to notice them, and though those changes were contained within the Sacred Abyss Universe, they were reflected in the Heavenly World and even beyond.

His energy was strong and incredibly coercive. Even if he didn't have a direct impact on the workings of the True Void Universe, it couldn't help but be perturbed by his release of power.

Not many people felt it. Not many were capable of feeling it in the first place, and those who were had no way of making out what exactly it was.

But there were two beings.

Two beings who were heavily impacted by the "awakening" of the Dark God's power after so many years.

Tiamat began her awakening long ago.

Flashes of history flickered through her mind, and her Legend began to change.

The power that she'd accumulated throughout her life reacted wildly to the aura of the Sacred Abyss Universs, and as she stayed there for longer periods of time, the feeling only got stronger.

Tiamat found her way back there a while back. Finding the end of the images in her head was more important to her than anything else, because those things were clues about her origins.

She never really cared about where she was from or what she was. She had always been so focused on everything else that she put aside such a primal desire.

However, as she found time to herself and a supportive atmosphere, the desire to completely uncover everything and understand herself became inescapable.

She hadn't found much.

When her thoughts cleared and the shadowy figures within became more visible, she thought the most obvious conclusion was the right one.

She was related to the Dark God.

But that...

'It's not true.'

Her soul rejected the idea. It was like she was an eagle, and a relation to someone like the Dark God was a cage. They simply didn't mesh.

However, she was certain that the Dark God was somehow related to the mysteries behind her existence.

Tiamat wanted to search for these things, so she'd been living on True Void World with the Gehenna Tribe. She trained here and grew considerably in strength, reaching a level near Godhood, and she searched the world for answers.

Life had been unfortunate for her. It seemed like no clues existed outside of her own mind, and those clues only revealed themselves when they felt like it.

If she wanted to search...

Wasn't it just impossible?

That was what she thought until that day.

Damien came to the Sacred Abyss Universe somehow and spread havoc to every corner of the planet.

Tiamat and Thalia watched his progress from the Gehenna territory. They saw as he destroyed every enemy in his path, and they basked in the deathly light of those massive explosions that had torn apart this world.

They were present as the world began to change into something completely different, but Damien never came to see them.

Of course, he was likely planning to check on this place later, but what was he doing now?

As that thought swept through her mind, Tiamat suddenly felt a change.

VOOOOOOOM!

A massive energy wave struck the True Void World and bounced off of the worldwide barriers that protected it.

VOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

The wave was incessant, getting stronger and stronger by the second.

Nobody else seemed to notice it. Tiamat spread her awareness, and all she saw was people living their lives like usual.

However, every time that energy struck the barrier, Tiamat's body instinctively jerked.

Something within her was getting stirred.

WHOOOOOSH!

Her head snapped to the sky as she felt a portion of the energy make its way through the barrier.

It showered the world, causing no change at all, but when it passed through the walls around her and touched her body...

Tiamat's head snapped back. Her eyes rolled back in her head as her body floated into the air without the aid of mana.

The flashes started again.

She was swallowed by her mind, forced to witness scene after scene that she simply couldn't understand.

'Birth...life...coronation...'

She mumbled unconsciously, her words containing no sense of rationality.

But that was what she saw.

A scene of two boys being born.

A scene of them living.

And a scene of coronation.

She saw a world that didn't exist anymore, and a scene that was so far in the past that barely anyone still remembered it.

The energy within her body trembled as it was influenced by the strange force descending from the sky.

Tiamat's body was becoming...complete?

That was how it looked. Her skin gained a new luster, her energy gained an unreasonable purity, and her soul was cleansed.

Though, it did become darker.

'The Dark God...'

She saw him, but he was not the one she was looking at.

There was someone else.

The scenes in Tiamat's head didn't make any sense from the start. They didn't flow chronologically, nor did they have any sound. Tiamat was forced to try and understand them by watching what was happening and assuming the context.

She saw the Dark God, but she wasn't sure if she was actually seeing him. She couldn't be sure of whether he was actually in the scene or not, and even if he was, she couldn't tell where he was or what he was doing.

All she saw was his energy.

And another energy next to it.

Those two were like polar opposites. They had the potential to be harmonious, but they could never be together without chaos.

Tiamat's attention was entirely focused on those two energies. The scene she was witnessing faded into the background as they took up her entire perception.

One was light, and one was darkness. One was order, and one was chaos.

Yet, they were both darkness. They were both chaos.

Her mind felt like it was breaking as she tried to comprehend even a little bit of what was happening.

And on the outside, her body's changes became far more pronounced.

The soul was a mysterious thing. It took a very long time for people to gain the ability to sense it, and it took even longer to gain control over it.

But changing it was a completely different matter.

The soul would grow and change as it pleased, but to consciously influence that change...? Most Gods still had trouble with it.

But Gods had the qualifications to try.

There were several factors that were taken into consideration before an individual could be considered on the cusp of Godhood.

It was almost like a checklist that needed to be completed.

And at the top of that checklist, the most important step...

A change in the soul, the etching of a qualification.

When the cosmos deemed a Divinity worthy of challenging the peak level, it would give them a stamp of approval that would allow them to meet the remaining criteria.

As Tiamat was drowned in foreign memories, her soul changed, and that qualification appeared.

Her mind and spirit were being shattered, but something about that energy she saw was the key.

Perhaps, at the end of this road, there weren't just answers.

Maybe...True Godhood was waiting for her too.

Chapter 1598 Awakening [2]

Tiamat's situation was obvious.

The Dark God never had children, so it was simply impossible for her to be his kin. However, while her relation to those involved was curious and vague, it was still true that she and that being had some sort of similarity pulling them together.

As such, when his energy, when his Nonexistence pushed into the True Void World, she felt its residual effects more clearly than anyone else.

The more curious case was somewhere else. Far, far away from the Sacred Abyss Universe.

Actually, it was in the Sanctuary with a very familiar person.

Or was it two?

Zara and Alea had faded into the background ever since Damien and the rest came to the Heavenly World.

Actually, it had been a decent amount of time since they'd even talked to Damien or his associates.

It was...only partially by choice.

Zara's feelings for her adoptive brother were clear. She cared for him more than anyone else, and would never give up their relationship for the world.

As for Alea, while she didn't hold Damien in the same regard, she was Zara's other half, and because of that, she'd inherited some of her sister's emotions.

Zara obviously wanted to accompany Damien and the rest of her friends in their adventures in the Heavenly World, and Alea had no plans to stop her.

However, they hadn't been able to.

Their first concern was none other than themselves.

Back then, they didn't know how exactly their fusion worked. It was chaotic and dangerous, and if they lost control of their power, they would put the lives of their comrades at risk.

During the war in Grand Heavens Boundary, they contributed greatly.

Slaughter had become the norm.

And when they were in that place of slaughter, their power bloomed into something magnificent.

Unfortunately, it wasn't the same anywhere else.

As the war came to an end, they found that they were losing control over their mana. The closer they got to Divinity, the more it felt like they were going to lose everything.

Despite their individual wishes, ambitions, and desires, they secluded themselves away from the world.

They trained in seclusion to understand their power together, went on adventures throughout the Sanctuary, fully making use of its various chances and opportunities, and fought with the new evils rising in that world to gain more experience.

Still, they could not overcome that barrier. Divinity escaped them.

Without it, they didn't want to go to the Heavenly World even if they had the opportunity, and that sentiment only became stronger as they came to an abrupt realization.

One day, as they sat with their two minds in sync, they sensed it.

"The instant we reach Divinity..." Zara said.

"...one of us will be swallowed," Alea finished.

That was the emptiness they'd been experiencing, the main reason why they stayed in the Sanctuary when everyone else was welcoming new horizons.

They wanted to grow stronger, but they didn't want to risk each other's lives for that purpose.

What were they meant to do...?

Naturally, they could have asked Damien or anyone else. Everyone they knew could give valuable advice using their varied experiences.

But the path to strength was not one that could be assisted. If they wanted to get everything they could out of the scenario, they needed to solve their problems by themselves.

That was how their search through the Sanctuary began. Just like Tiamat, they scoured every end of the earth for answers.

But unlike their Divine counterpart, they found clues.

There was a path, a trail that seemed to be left by some ancient Godbeast. As they followed it, they encountered many things they didn't even know were possible, and more importantly...

They stood in a temple that looked far too clean for its old age. There was a statue of a chimera on an altar in front of them, and to their sides, various stone beasts clad in armor.

This temple was the end of the trail they'd been following. After going through so many twists and turns, they'd expected there to be answers here.

However, what they found were more questions.

A black shadow and a white shadow stood to each side of the altar. The two of them looked at Zara and Alea with oddly warm expressions.

They beckoned forth, calling the two to bask in the altar's light and accept its blessings.

'They're...'

'...our mothers.'

Zara and Alea were on the same page. They weren't conscious to see those figures that healed them when they saved Beast Emperor Star, but those two were still embedded in their memories.

These shadows...

Were they the same as the ones from before?

Could they possibly be...?

The duo originally planned to take a second and think it over before making rash decisions, but, just like Tiamat, they sensed a disturbance in the atmosphere.

It was far more subtle in the Sanctuary than anywhere else. After all, this place was floating in the Void somewhere far, far away from both of the two main connected cosmos.

The Sanctuary didn't get influenced by its proximity to the Sacred Abyss like the True Void Universe did.

Rather...

'Damien?'

Zara's first thought when she sensed the energy.

It didn't feel anything like him, but its entry was unmistakably made through his bond with the Sanctuary.

It filled the Universal Core before pulsating outward and slightly changing the laws and intrinsic functions of this semi-cosmos.

'That's not Damien. That is...something dangerous.'

Alea corrected her sister. She felt an ominous premonition as that energy continued to flow over them and the altar.

They didn't have an immediately reaction. Their minds didn't fill with strange things, nor did they get some sort of power boost.

The shadows in front of them disappeared as the temple's illusions were shattered.

For Zara and Alea, it felt like their minds had cleared and somewhat merged into one, though their individual thought processes remained.

The energy was dangerous, but it also signified opportunity.

Their bodies seemed to accept it well, and more than anything, it calmed their Nox lineage, turning it submissive and docile.

'This power...we need it.'

Alea was usually the more cautious one, but she couldn't help but agree with Zara.

A power like that could be the solution to their problems. It could be the path that led out of their miserable rut.

"Keep pushing forward?" Alea asked with a smile.

"Yeah, but the goal is different," Zara responded in kind.

For these two who had been isolated from the people they cared about for so long, relief couldn't come soon enough.

But for them to reach that point, there was a lot more work to do.

BOOM!

Their hand shot out, and two winding snakes of whiteness and blackness cut through the air, striking the statue on the altar and destroying it entirely.

"Wasn't that supposed to be the ancestor of all Godbeasts or something?" Alea asked, raising their brow.

"Doesn't matter," Zara responded with a shrug.

"The stuff here is ours now anyway. What's the use in keeping around a statue for someone whose been pulling dirty tricks for as long as we've been following this trail!?"

"I wouldn't say he's been pulling anything, since he's...you know...dead and everything."

"You get what I mean."

The duo bantered like they always did, completely calm in the face of the twelve stone beasts that were now radiating auras like Divinities.

They had a huge fight in front of them, and they'd have many more as they continued to tread this difficult road. However, they didn't fret.

With their goals in mind, both new and old, they'd succeed in everything they wanted to do and finally reunite with their people.

They were optimistic in their thinking, and they had every right to be, but...

There was no way they realized just how pivotal that random wave of energy would be on their lives.

They had no idea that because they had perceived that energy and even gone as far as to try and take it for themselves, they'd opened up a path that only a few had ever tread before.

Zara and Alea had faded into the background as their allies went to the Heavenly World.

But as long as they stayed strong and persevered...

It was practically guaranteed that it wouldn't stay that way for much longer.

Chapter 1599 Selfishness [1]

Tiamat and the Zara/Alea duo were unique, but not as unique as one would expect.

The way they reacted to the Dsrk God's energy was unique, and was the opportunity they gained from it.

However, they weren't the only ones it affected.

As mentioned before, the Dark God's energy spread to affect all three of the cosmos that were related to each other: the True Void Universe, Sacred Abyss Universe, and Sanctuary.

Why Tiamat sensed the energy was obvious, but what about Zara and Alea?

They had Nox blood, sure, but not all of the Nox were able to understand what had happened. In fact, aside from Yong An and a few others, none of them were affected in the slightest.

But when it came to the three involved cosmos, the number of people who were truly affected by the Dark God's actions was uncountable.

From random farmers who were blessed by the energy to powerful experts who were cursed, countless people felt those effects and reacted in different ways.

The Dark God never just used one power. He changed Existence itself, and the after effects of such a move were...

Well, they were interesting to say the least.

Nobody could quite tell yet, but a huge shift in reality had begun in the Heavenly World. A wave was sweeping through the people, infecting them like a plague.

Nonexistence was that kind of power. It wasn't inherently hostile, so for some, its presence was actually more of a boon than anything else.

But on the grand scheme, that same sentiment couldn't be reflected.

With the presence of Nonexistence encroaching on the True Void Universe and coercing its laws...

It was safe to say that many things would change soon. Whether those changes were for the better or worse, though...

That was entirely up to fate to decide.

So why did Damien do it?

Even a baby could tell that trying to meet the Dark God was incredibly stupid. It put the lives of countless people in danger. It made the threat the Sacred Abyss posed manifold worse, and it gave the Heavenly World far less time to get equipped to face such a disaster.

In the grand scheme of things, there was no good they could've come out of that meeting.

Damien wasn't an idiot. He may have been dumb in his youth, but he liked to think he'd improved since then.

If so, then why did he still choose to make such a brainless decision.

It wasn't just because his instincts told him it was right. He trusted them a lot, and he would absolutely act on them in most scenarios, but this wasn't one of them.

Rationality told him he had no business meeting an enemy he couldn't even touch, and when he actually met the Dark God, that conclusion was further proven.

However, he still acted without hesitation and did what he did.

And despite the consequences of his decision, he didn't feel much remorse.

It was hard to fathom the scale of it all. Everything had been thrown into chaos now.

But Damien...

Damien benefitted.

There was no grand reason behind his actions.

He didn't have some benevolent purpose or even some sort of arrogant idea that he could do something.

No, his actions were taken purely out of selfishness.

He always talked about doing things for his own benefit, but most of the time, he acted either for a goal or for someone else's sake.

There were a lot of times when he ignored his selfishness because he had to focus on a larger goal. This time, it was just different.

He couldn't stop himself, because the prospective benefits were just too amazing.

And while the outcome was tragic in many ways, practically dooming the True Void Universe...

'With this, I think I can do it.'

Damien didn't think it was doomed.

The Dark God showed him a lot of power so he could see a level he "would never reach."

That was the true showing of arrogance.

That was the real mistake, regardless of how it seemed.

Because as Damien sat there against a random tree in the middle of nowhere and processed the events that had just unfolded, his mind experienced a qualitative change.

In that moment, Damien felt Nonexistence for the first time.

Nonexistence was different from Existence, since it quite literally didn't exist.

To find it was a daunting task that had taken even those who managed to complete it millions of years to do.

How did one sense Nonexistence?

Sure, with a completed Existence in one's hand, it seemed like it would be easy to just look for the inverse of that force and comprehend it.

But it wasn't so simple with these two absolute concepts.

Existence was everything.

Everything one could possibly ever think or do was contained within Existence.

So how would one be able to sense, comprehend, or even know where to start when it came to Nonexistence?

Damien didn't know the answer, and the people who did were either not present, dead, or enemies.

Fortunately, he didn't need to anymore.

The strange force he felt back then, true nothingness that consumed one's soul...

When it hit him, his memories of when he died became clearer than day. He was able to feel the force he was submerged in at that time and actually understand what it was doing.

He couldn't do it now, but it wouldn't be too far in the future when Damien would need to start comprehending Nonexistence.

After all, it wasn't just nothingness that he felt.

True Existence. The end of the path he was currently treading. The Dark God's version of it was completely different from what Damien was trying to achieve, but it was all made up of the same six concepts.

The concept of order, the concept of harmony, the concept of mist, the concept of domination, the concept of chaos, and...

'...the concept of control.'

It was simple and easy, an overall comprehensive concept that combined the best of its predecessors into one.

It was called the concept of control, but it wasn't about controlling Existence. Rather, this concept focused on the control Existence had on all things.

Damien had thought something similar a while back when he decided to stop holding himself back with convention.

Before one could truly wield Existence, one had to realize the true weight of the power they were gaining access to.

One had to understand what it meant to control everything.

Only then would Existence surrender to their whims.

'As long as I understand it, I can control it.'

Damien had gained the keys to success. Though he had, in theory, doomed everything...

'...if I can make the most out of what I gained, then I can change everything.'

If he too could control true Existence...if he too gained access to Nonexistence...

Wouldn't the Dark God lose all of his advantages?

'Five years.'

Damien could alter the time flow in the Heavenly World if he tried, but on such a large scale—

'No, that's not how it works anymore.'

Convention was a thing that didn't exist.

He could change the time flow of the Heavenly World to give them what they needed, but that didn't mean he wouldn't have to push the entire world into a state of rapid improvement.

Even with time, they needed to extensively prepare for this war.

'But, in the end, it all falls on my shoulders.'

He caused this predicament, and he had to be the one to step up and solve it.

Not because of some moral obligation, but because Damien had put himself in a situation where he was quite literally the only remaining hope.

Selfishness.

Or was it the mindset of an Absolute?

For the sake of his self-improvement, Damien wagered the entire cosmos as if he owned it.

Still, while he did feel the pressure, it didn't make him nervous.

This was the exact kind of stimulation he needed. Nothing would change if the stakes weren't at least this high.

He believed he would reach that point, and he believed he would win this war.

Because he was Damien Void, and one day...

...he would be Absolute.

Chapter 1600 Selfishness [2]

'Okay.'

Damien calmed his racing heart and mind.

Things were only bleak if he let them be that way. For now, there was nothing to worry about.

'First off...'

He looked around.

'...why do I always land in forests at times like these?'

Perhaps it was because forested environments were more than just common in the Heavenly World, but that was beside the point.

Damien felt the air and the energy around him to try and gauge his position, but for some reason, he couldn't seem to feel any familiarity.

'This is absolutely the Heavenly World, but nothing about it resembles the Heavenly World I know. This mana is...regal? It feels like this land was made exclusively for royalty.'

Damien frowned. He was quite familiar with the Heavenly World by now. Even if he was in a location he'd never seen, he would usually be able to judge where he was in the world by the atmosphere, aura, and memories of the earth.

The atmosphere only clued that this was indeed a place where mana was the energy source.

As for the memories of the earth...

'How could there possibly be an area millions of kilometers wide that hasn't ever been touched by the foot of a living being?'

Damien's arrival was quite literally the first time any living presence had ever stepped foot here. It was eerily impossible for something like this to happen.

'But if it's the Heavenly World, then there has to be civilization somewhere.'

Damien immediately teleported away from his previous position.

He didn't necessarily pick a direction, but he moved through the spatial layers and continued spreading his awareness, only stopping when he found signs of life in the vicinity.

'Let's find out where I am. Once I'm situated, the first priority is to spread the word about what happened.'

It was only right to let others know. He couldn't train the entire world on his own.

There was one big problem keeping him from doing so immediately.

'My connection to the Sanctuary has been...altered.'

He couldn't enter that place anymore.

He didn't think anyone else's connection with the Sanctuary was touched. Despite being unable to enter, he could still feel that he was its rightful owner and the one who controlled its laws.

It was as if the Dark God purposefully gave Damien a handicap, taking away the one thing that made it absolutely impossible for him to die before escaping.

'I'm really all-in.'

There was no going back now.

'Then...'

First, to find where he was. Second, to find a way to inform the palace about what had happened, and third...

'Well, we'll figure that out later.'

Damien cut his thoughts short as he saw light ahead.

'A city?'

If so, it was perfect.

Damien got there within half a second, and as he gazed at the scene below, he saw a sprawling area that was home to several billions of people.

'How the hell did I miss this before?'

It was larger than many of the hub cities in the Heavenly World, and it was filled to the brim with people of all shapes and sizes.

Some were over ten feet tall, wider than a pickup truck.

Others were small and seemingly fragile, but still emanating a great amount of vitality.

If there was one thing they all had in common...

'Scales.'

Somewhere on their bodies, all of them had scales of a variety Damien knew well.

'Are tbh dragonkin?'

If so...

'Is this the Western Region?'

The only place in the Heavenly World where he hasn't been,

'Is this Arulion?'

Arulion, the Kingdom of Dragons. Damien had heard of it from the Ice Luan hybrid, Katya, when he was looking for the Harmony Fruit, but he never thought he'd see this place so soon.

'According to her, you need dragon lineage to enter this place. I don't have a bloodline core anymore, so I don't really qualify, but...I guess being randomly transported by the force of both Existence and Nonexistence is a good way to avoid those types of rules.'

Damien was pretty sure of his guess, but before he completely accepted it, he had to check.

'Not having to kill people to read Existence is a huge convenience.'

If it was a mortal or someone near that level, Damien's interference would go completely unnoticed and would leave no lasting effects on their souls.

He landed on the street and fluidly transformed his body based on the characteristics of those around him.

His arm brushed against a random passerby, and then another, and then another.

These people were all under the level of Divinity, and as Damien made contact, he saw everything they'd done with their lives and learned everything they learned.

There wasn't much a lower existence could teach him, but if it was knowledge about this place...?

'So I was right.'

He was indeed in Arulion. This was the hidden world of the dragons, the space within the illusions that made up the exterior borders of the Western Region.

'...'

Damien took a second to think.

'Should I warp?'

If he wanted to go home, then warping was the right answer.

'But will I be able to return here if I do?'

"No" seemed like the right answer, but considering how well Damien could disguise himself, even he didn't believe it was true.

Damien sighed to himself.

He wanted to continue this adventure, but it could definitely wait. No matter how hypocritical it sounded, there was still a limit to his selfishness.

'It won't take too long.'

He already had everything planned out. It was just a matter of execution.

'Plus, now that I've been here and can get back, it's not a bad idea to try and get the Dragon Clan on my side.'

They would be a great help in the war, regardless of what their true strength was.

Nevertheless, after marking his position, Damien quietly disappeared from the crowd, leaving none aware of his presence.

He arrived back at the palace, but it was different from the one he left.

For one, his wives were no longer present. Each of them had gone on their own adventures, so he had returned to an empty house.

His mother and the rest, however, were still running the ship as smoothly as always.

She and Serena had more severe reactions to his return than anyone else.

"My son!"

Claire exclaimed the instant she saw him, rushing over and pulling him into her embrace.

"How could you disappear so suddenly? Did you know how worried I was?!"

She was both relieved to see him and admonishing him for his recklessness. She couldn't decide whether she wanted to discipline him or forgive him.

Damien quietly accepted it all.

This...

'This is a new feeling.'

Motherly love.

His childhood was filled with it, but it had been several decades since the last time he'd felt this emotion so strongly.

Serena was the same. She stood by Claire's side and scolded Damien where she couldn't, properly acting like a second mom to him.

It really was wholesome, and Damien appreciated it hugely.

Still, he returned with daunting information, and they probably wouldn't look at him the same after he told them what he'd done.

"Mom..."

His voice was quiet, but still loud enough for both Claire and Serena to hear.

"...I did something big."

Was he supposed to call it a mistake? It wasn't one. He'd done it entirely on purpose. Was he supposed to say it was a bad decision? In his eyes, this was a decision that would only result in benefits in the long term.

He didn't know how to broach the subject, but he decided to just tell the complete truth and let them judge him afterwards.

That was the moment this impending war became real.

And Claire's reaction...