

Void 1781

Chapter 1781 Agreement [3]

Damien spent several days with each of them, satisfying their cravings as he satisfied his own. He told them what he'd been doing and learned what they'd been up to. And, he talked to them about the future, about their plans after all of this was over.

It seemed like everyone had reached a consensus. They were far past retirement age. It was about time for them to settle down and stop working. One day, they would have a condo far away from anything else, a place where they could enjoy peace. They all awaited that moment when they'd achieved everything and could finally stay together as a family.

Damien wanted to do something for them, as mentioned before.

Iris was making a new influence similar to the Prismatic Sun Holy Land to establish more influence in the Heavenly World for herself, Damien, and Void Palace. What she needed most was exposure and status, which could be easily given.

Iris' sect was already the greatest influence in the Northern Region. If he just lent her a little bit of aid in clearing up the region and making it completely safe, she would excel. For Rose, it was already clear as well. She wanted his child. She was otherwise content with her life, so what more could he provide her but himself and their future child?

It was a big decision he needed to make. For the moment, he chose to wait and see how long it would be before the real final war started. Elena didn't want any help. She was more independent than the rest, after all. Damien still wanted to give her something, but the most she would accept was his enhancement of the Valkyrie lineage in her possession so she could make better use of it.

It was hard for Damien to show affection to Elena with material things. She and Rose always liked to argue, but they were most similar in the way they were happy just spending time with their husband. Ruyue came last. She was the happiest seeing Damien at this time, as she had been longing for him since they last parted. She was also the one Damien wanted to help the most since her path was filled with too many thorns.

For Ruyue who always quietly stood by his side and showed him the side of her that was invisible to the rest of the world, he wanted to change the world. He wanted to change the laws of heaven so that she would never suffer again.

However, she resolved herself to follow the path of an Unrecorded. Rather than resigning when she learned what was in store for her, she committed to suffering for her success.

If she hadn't set foot on that path, then Damien would have easily solved all of her problems for her.

Since she did, he could only help her to an extent. After all, if he did too much, her chance to reach that level would be robbed of her.

Damien gave Ruyue lineage. He gave Ruyue a talent that surpassed her own and a bloodline that could support her until the very end.

It was just a small change in her foundation, but it was what granted her the qualifications to aim big.

Even for Dante Void, the barrier that kept him only knowing a few aspects of Existence instead of rising above it was his foundation and his previous practice. He missed a lot of steps that he needed to take and that was precisely what blocked him at the very last moment.

Damien only ensured that Ruyue wouldn't face the same roadblock. The rest was up to her, just as she wanted.

It was good that she had purpose now. Damien didn't like it at all when she was walking around like a ghost when he wasn't around. He refused to take away the motivation she'd gained and the dreams she chased. An entire week passed as Damien spent a few days with each of them. The fabric of the Heavenly World was already changing as the Dark God prepared for his siege.

Damien soon separated himself from his clone and gave it enough of his mental capacity to control and lead the people while using Existence to help them.

Meanwhile, he, as the main consciousness, entered a secret realm of his own creation to train.

As long as his other half was in the Heavenly World, he would always know its situation. In fact, even the concept of a "main body" was inconsequential at this point. As long as Damien decided it his main body, he could switch between any form of himself without problems. Nevertheless, the Heavenly World was put on the back burner in his eyes.

Nonexistence became the only focus in his mind.

Nonexistence was more than just "everything that doesn't exist." That was its original form, the complete opposite of what existed. However, as "nothingness" was redefined through the eyes of those who attempted to perceive it, it was given another face.

Improbability: That which disrupts the fabric of reality.

Concepts such as "revival" were included in Nonexistence because they went against the order on which Existence functioned.

These concepts were a starting point Damien could use to further his comprehension. At a certain point, however, his mind would enter a plane that could not be explained through words or imagery. He would be left to his own devices and tethered to reality only through Existence itself.

He wasn't there yet. Only after traversing that realm for a long enough time would he be able to say that his Existence and Nonexistence were at the same level, the highest level they could possibly reach.

Damien closed his eyes as he wondered where to start.

Revival? It was related to life and death. By interpreting Samsara in reverse, it was easy to reach its most basic aspects.

'The problem is that I don't know if that will lead me to its connection to Nonexistence.'

In the first place, it was a concept that had never been comprehended before despite being the long-standing wish of so many people.

'Is it right to delve into it?'

Damien sighed.

He didn't think he'd find himself feeling like this after living for so long.

Things were moving too fast.

It was like Arulion was summer vacation and the instant he went back to school in the fall he was faced with final exams.

This kind of scenario wasn't meant to come so fast, was it?

Damien almost wanted it to slow down so he could enjoy more experiences, but what was there left to do?

He'd come too far in this short amount of time. If there was anything to blame, it was the urgency of the situation and his own talent, neither of which could be helped.

'Whatever. I just have to put my head down and do it.'

The part of him that was always searching for a new thrill was hesitant, but the other part of his mind that yearned for a quiet life with his family thought differently.

While they battled it out for supremacy and tried to lead him in different directions, Damien closed his eyes and delved into his own soul.

Nonexistence, a state of nothingness.

Not only was it the next step in his path, it was the exact thing he needed at this moment.

Because, for the first time in many, many decades, his mind was incredibly loud right now.

Chapter 1782 Seclusion [1]

Damien honestly thought it would be an easy time. It would be time-consuming, sure, but in practice, it was nothing more than sitting down and comprehending a concept, something he'd done countless times before.

However, what he thought was not the reality of the situation. When it came down to it, there was more in store for him than a boring time alone in a dark place.

Damien spent several weeks trying to interpolate the concept of "revival" into a facet of his own power. With his knowledge of Samsara, finding the root of revival was actually relatively simple. Once he put his mind to it, he had no trouble theorizing about how it could be achieved.

However, he still needed to gain a foundational understanding of what Nonexistence truly was.

In short, he had to bring that which did not exist into the light so he could conquer it.

That was just as hard as it sounded.

When Damien realized that none of his research into the concepts of Nonexistence that were created by living beings could get him to its core, he was truly stumped on what to do next.

Existence was everything. That had to be said once again. Everything and anything that the human mind could comprehend was a concept of Existence. Only those things that were out of that realm of understanding, things that even Damien couldn't imagine, were under the umbrella of the concept he had opened the gates to.

It was impossible to comprehend. That was exactly why it was a barrier that barely anyone crossed.

Perhaps across the myriad cosmos in the infinite Void, there were many people who had reached the peak of Existence. There were even some like the Dark God who had gone even further than that.

However, barring those few, none could ever reach the starting point to comprehend Nonexistence. None of them could do anything with the power once they'd gained it.

But, if Damien started to think about a massive Void where countless cosmos spanned infinitely, a place where the number of living beings was just as infinite, it didn't make sense for there to be so little chaos.

If people were running around using their cosmos' to invade others, the True Void Universe would have been gone a long time ago.

Sure, the Dark God was a Conqueror so his presence could be deemed as the reason why no other dared to approach.

But what if it was something different?

'What if those people aren't able to do the same things he can?'

There had to be a barrier to entry that everyone faced. Once one had access to Existence, it wasn't necessarily hard to recognize its counterpart and gain the qualifications to comprehend it.

If everyone used the method that the Dark God exploited, challenging others and devouring cosmos, then they'd progress through that stage quite rapidly.

Nonexistence ran rampant in those final moments of a cosmos, after all. Even if one couldn't imagine its depth, one could slowly mimic that energy until one's comprehension saw a substantial increase.

'What if there's something; a mechanism that keeps people from using that method to comprehend the concept?'

The Dark God may not have reached his status by devouring cosmos. It was entirely possible that he decided to start that conquest after he had attained a level near where he currently was.

Damien changed his approach after considering this branch of thinking. It was all hypothetical, but without the energy that represented it, Nonexistence would be the same.

It didn't matter if he was reaching. Any branch of thought had to be followed until the very end. Even if they didn't lead him in the right direction, they'd lead him somewhere. He could use them as learning experiences regardless.

Weeks and weeks passed. In the Heavenly World, Dimensional Cracks once again started opening in stride.

All over the world, forces were prepared to deal with them. A war with the fate of the world at stake began.

Damien's other half commanded the troops as best as he could. Cooperating with his siblings and his wives, he had a comprehensive understanding of the entire world's situation that he could use to determine how he was to act.

The first step was a merit system like no other.

Every being in the world who was willing to fight received a pin that sunk into their skin. That pin registered every achievement they made in battle and out to determine their number of merit points.

Up until this point, it was simple. However, the actual rewards were the wilder part.

[Direct Rank Increase - 5000 Merit Points]

[Godly Comprehension - 10000 Merit Points]

[Mythical Bloodline Infusion - 15000 Merit Points.]

Above the regular rewards like elixirs and training materials were rewards that nobody could imagine.

5000 was a small number of points for a God, however, it was massive for a 3rd class soldier. If those people saved up for long enough, they'd be offered a direct promotion to 4th class?

People didn't believe it at first, and some still didn't since nobody had attained that particular perk yet.

But, when everything else was true, why would only a few of them be lies?

The Divinities of the world fought fiercely for 10000 Merit Points. A few of them reached that point, and they received exactly what they were promised.

A Godly comprehension of their specific law, a way for them to improve far more than even the Heavenly God Plane allowed, was presented to them.

It was a method that allowed for the rapid growth of troops without shattering their foundations and future potential. And, it was the most motivating system in existence. For those who wanted power, it offered power. For those who wanted money, it offered money. Even for those who wanted status, it presented ways to improve that aspect of their lives once this war ended such as the funds and location to build a new sect and an exclusive title from Void Palace itself.

It worked better than expected. All classes of society, all people from weakest to strongest, were given a reason to fight in this war with their lives at risk.

Firstly, the Foreign Races were kept at bay. They were constantly being produced, but there were blessing sights all around the world that suddenly appeared all around the world that replenished the stamina and energy of all allies fighting within their bounds infinitely. Damien wasn't thrown off by the fact that he could not directly attack the enemy.

No, there were so many ways for him to help his people fight for their own glory that this method was actually more preferential to him.

His population was alive and free-willed, while the Dark God's was oppressed and enslaved. The way they fought was different. The desperation they showed was different.

In the few months that passed immediately after Damien entered seclusion, the world changed significantly once again.

However, only his second half was there to see it.

The main body, the body that was busy training to reach the Dark God...

He had been whisked away to a place far, far away. A place that nobody else in this cosmos could reach.

Chapter 1783 Seclusion [2]

How did he get there?

It wasn't on purpose, but everyone in his position experienced the same thing as long as they gained their power through proper means.

Damien eventually decided to try and summon the energy of Nonexistence. He couldn't control it and he could only slightly perceive it, but it did exist in his body.

It was an aura that manifested in the way he wanted it to. For most people, it would turn black, but that was a color that represented the Void in Damien's mind.

Existence was a formless power. Damien viewed Nonexistence the same way. As such, when he summoned it into the cave abode, it didn't necessarily appear.

The air became several degrees colder. Not because the temperature was decreasing, but because the air was being banished from the room.

Nonexistence had a noticeable effect on the world even in such a small quantity. The cavern was a little dark from the start, but it was plunged into an eternal blackness the instant Damien summoned the energy.

Existence itself was being denied and rewritten. Damien's eyes sharpened as he wondered if the effect would be contained or if it would consume the world if left alone.

To corral it, he had two options. The first was to put the energy away, and the second...

The second was to summon Existence as well and feel what it was like to control both sides of the coin.

This was something that everyone and anyone would eventually do. It was too tempting even if it didn't come out of a place of curiosity. The two energies didn't meld. They were direct opposites and could not logically interact, so they formed a state of yin and yang around Damien's body.

The problem was that there wasn't an equilibrium between them. Existence took up too much space and naturally suppressed its counterpart, which Nonexistence could not accept.

It gripped at Damien's body and forced out more power than he could handle.

His eyes widened. He used Existence and attempted to suppress the energy as he returned it to his body, but it was no longer listening to his orders.

Damien's entire body was covered in it. It went up his nose and in his mouth, polluting his system entirely.

His eyes rolled into the back of his head. A feeling very similar to what he experienced in death filled his body and soul.

Damien's head lurched back like he was possessed. He tried to utter a guttural scream, purely the result of the oddity he felt with the energy around him.

It was like pain, but it was not pain. It was like pleasure, but it was not pleasure. It was a feeling that didn't exist and could only be related to existing emotions roughly. The only factual thing was that it was a feeling that made Damien scream.

His form turned into a black fog that dispersed into the cave abode. That was the last Damien saw of the Heavenly World for a decent amount of time.

The fog took him to a different plane. It wasn't another cosmos like the Sacred Abyss, nor was it a remnant realm like the Heavenly God Plane.

It was completely different from anywhere else Damien had ever been.

'It's a realm that does not exist.'

His eyes narrowed as he looked around. 'This place...how do I explain this?'

Everything looked relatively normal. It wasn't even a particularly beautiful scenery, but there were traces that the more beautiful areas were further away.

Damien was in a field of rolling hills. The only thing he could see in the distance was a dark lighthouse. The sky was a dark blue color like the ocean. It could have just been a strange feature of the realm, but it was what caught Damien's eye first.

Second was the massive black ocean that surrounded the island he was on. He could see other islands in the distance, but that sea seemed to be strange as well.

'It's fake. All of it.'

His instincts told him clearly.

Everything he saw felt real and looked real. There wasn't a single clue that supported his theory. However, wasn't it enough that he couldn't access Existence?

'It's different from the energy being blocked. This is as if there isn't "Existence" anywhere near me.'

If that was the case, then logically this realm did not exist.

Then, how was he here?

And...what were those auras he sensed in the distance?

Damien turned his eyes in that direction and immediately saw five men approaching.

They were flying in a strange way and surrounded by a red and black energy that oddly resembled Nonexistence in its aura.

'Hm?'

First of all, was it possible for a group of five people who looked like bandits to actually have an aura of nothingness? Damien clenched his fists and fell into thought.

'It might be dangerous. My power isn't working properly. But...judging by their auras, I should still be able to win.'

His physical strength could probably take care of them. That was his first thought.

'But, maybe it's better to wait it out?'

If he played it safe and acted like the victim, he could gain some information that was otherwise unavailable to him.

Damien was practically a mortal with a God-like body now. Without Existence to provide him with all of its conveniences, his life immediately became another degree harder.

Still, he was able to adapt quickly. Even this was a situation with clear cause and effect.

Nonexistence brought him here. With his previous train of thought as a basis, he could determine that this place was likely the very barrier of entry that he was wondering about.

If this was a place where all people were taken when they reached a certain point, if there was a condition that had to be fulfilled for them to leave...

'Then everyone here, at some point in time, had the potential to be better than me.'

However, everyone here was still here. They were not back in the places they came from.

The five bandit-like men approached closer and slammed into the ground before Damien.

With ill intentions in their hearts and eyes, they stepped forward.

"Look, we got a newbie!"

"Keke, it's our lucky day! Newbies don't come that often anymore!"

"Well, we gotta show him the ropes!"

"Yes, we do!"

Damien raised his brow.

What was this shitty dialogue?

Anyway, he let them continue for the sake of it.

As they babbled, they stepped closer, brandishing the weapons in their hands.

"Kid, you must have been pretty big wherever you came from, but you're nothing here. Since we're your seniors, think of what's coming as a life lesson we're giving you at a very small price."

Their leader spoke with a stern expression. The black and red aura around him focused itself on his club.

"It'll be good for you. Really."

Chapter 1784 Seclusion [3]

Damien kept his gaze sharp. He stepped back as they stepped forward as if intimidated by their presence.

His eyes stayed not on them, but on their aura. It was difficult to dissect it with his awareness alone, but it was necessary to try.

The leader seemed to be telling the truth about his whole "life lesson" thing. He was somewhat sincere in his intentions, though his plan was still to beat and rob him.

It wasn't too surprising. If this was as Damien presumed, then all of these people once had great stature. They were beings who could rule the cosmos with their power alone, so they couldn't naturally possess the demeanor of a street thug.

Instead, if they chose to take on such roles out of necessity, then it was natural for a little bit of their original character to shine through.

Damien didn't act scared. There was no way he'd be scared in this situation. He looked more like a cornered tiger who still wanted to fight despite knowing his disadvantages.

The bandit leader approached, not saying a single word, and raised his club. The red and black energy swirled and turned into a manifestation of some sort, but Damien couldn't recognize its form.

Perhaps it was a creature from that man's original world, but to Damien, it was something that "didn't exist."

'Oh?'

Despite his situation, Damien was pleasantly surprised.

Right, Nonexistence was also subjective, wasn't it?

If a person was ignorant, then wasn't anything outside their sphere of knowledge nonexistent?

Because Damien was on such a high pedestal, there wasn't much that didn't exist in his world. That made it hard for him to imagine the things he could use to get closer to the concept.

But this was a method.

In this way, he could absolutely strengthen his comprehension. Nevertheless, now wasn't the time.

Damien watched the club approach in slow motion, contemplating whether or not he should let it hit him.

He didn't know until a second later that it was never fated to land.

BANG!

Before the energy reached Damien, it was blocked by another. It was similarly dark but did not have the same red accents. Still, it smelled of Nonexistence.

"What do you think you're doing?!"

A powerful voice came from behind. Hearing it, Damien really felt like he was twenty again and in a world where everyone was his senior. An aged man with a thick beard approached from behind looking at the five with furious eyes.

"You idiots...do you know what it means for someone new to come here after all this time?! And you treat him like this?! Blasphemous!"

"H-Harold! Wait, I was just trying to help him out!"

"Help him out, my ass. I know it's getting hard for you, but don't stoop this low."

The bandit leader gritted his teeth and glared at the man named Harold. "Try it."

Harold sneered. The bandit leader gripped his club harder, but he wasn't allowed to take a single step. That slight sign of aggression was enough for Harold to swipe his arm, creating a cloud of black wind that devoured the group of five whole.

"They'll come back. Only, they'll be a little weaker next time."

Harold glanced at Damien with a smile. "Follow me, boy. I will take you to a safer place."

This was indeed a place created by Nonexistence, and there had to be a condition that needed to be fulfilled for them to leave.

Damien nodded without hesitation. 'I was right.'

He followed Harold, but he didn't need all of the information the man was willing to provide.

Damien was certain that his thoughts about the realm were correct. This was indeed a place created by Nonexistence, and there had to be a condition that needed to be fulfilled for them to leave.

'The good thing is that time is probably fake here too. I'll be back the same moment I left when I get out.'

The bad thing was that depending on the condition, it could take an unreasonable amount of time for Damien to get back to that moment in the first place.

'But as long as I do well here, I can leave with more comprehension of Nonexistence than anyone.'

It was a huge opportunity, but it was clearly the opposite for the people who stayed here.

Nevertheless, Damien followed Harold to learn about the specific mechanics of this place. He also wanted to hear the stories of the people who called this place home.

It wasn't yet clear if Harold was an enemy, but Damien got the feeling that he at least didn't want him dead. That was enough for now.

Harold took him to the lighthouse he saw in the distance when he first arrived. There was a small town around it, made up of shabby log houses that looked to be recently constructed.

"They were built millions of years ago in our perception. However, one must reach a certain level of proficiency in the concept of the Abyss to gain time to build. Those of us still on this island are unable to do so," Harold commented.

"Including you?" Damien asked.

"Unfortunately, yes. Despite my time here, the Abyss has not come closer than it was near when I first arrived."

Damien didn't question what the "Abyss" was. Every cosmos likely had its own way of naming Nonexistence. It was only called as such in the True Void because he decided that Existence and Nonexistence were what stood between creation and destruction and the Void.

For someone who spoke as if he experienced the construction of these cabins to say that he made no progress was more concerning than any sort of difference in names.

Harold didn't take him into the lighthouse, but to the closest house to its entrance.

Once they were inside, he motioned for Damien to have a seat and poured a strange concoction unlike anything Damien had seen before.

"This is Urbet, a common beverage consumed by the people of my home. Feel free to try some."

Harold sat down across from Damien, placing their cups on the table.

"Now, newcomer, allow me to inform you about this realm; the Land of Nothingness."

Harold's expression was stern. His eyes were empty as if this story was one that haunted him during every waking moment.

'The Land of Nothingness...'

Otherwise known as the Land of the Forgotten.

It was a place where the Unrecorded went to die when they became too arrogant, a place where experts perished like flies.

It was a prison for people who could not reach the extent of their potential, and a paradise for those who could.

This place was the exact reason why the Void wasn't filled with cosmos at war. It was the place that confined the people who had the potential to cause that kind of chaos. However, it was never meant to be a prison.

Instead, this was the test of qualifications that Damien skipped when he became a God.

This time, like everyone else, he had to struggle to reach the heights he dreamed of.

However, he was prepared for it.

His time as a supreme being didn't erase all of the experiences that got him to that point. The spirit inside of him never died. It merely went into hibernation as it was no longer needed.

As Harold talked, as he learned about the truths of this realm, Damien's eyes lit up with the flames of burning determination.

He was going to conquer this place and return to his own cosmos.

And he was going to do it faster than anyone else had done before.

Chapter 1785 Land of Nothingness [1]

The Land of Nothingness was not created by anyone or anything. That made its entire existence an impossibility. It was entirely outside of the realm of possibility to the point where even those who had reached a state above the Heavenly Order of their individual cosmos could not comprehend how they could possibly experience it.

As the other side of the coin, did Nonexistence also have its own laws and functions? Did it have its own sort of "existence" that went unrecognized?

These were the questions that everyone asked themselves when they first entered this place, but they'd come to find out that nothing they did could possibly comprehend these sorts of "mirror laws" contained within Nonexistence.

This place was the only reason they could be hypothesized in the first place. And this place that seemed filled with clues was not forgiving in the slightest.

The Land of Nothingness was made up of five islands separated by a Sea of Nothingness. That sea could not be crossed through ordinary means. Instead, one could only progress to the next island after reaching a certain level of comprehension in Nonexistence.

The islands became progressively more advanced as their population gained more control over the realm. This one, as the first island, was usually a place where only the newest people would stay.

Its population was no more than thirty. Only that many people were unable to make it past this place, including Harold.

As Damien guessed, a condition needed to be fulfilled at every island to move on. On the fifth island, one would face a final test that had to be passed in order to return to the world.

It was said that almost nobody had passed that test. Rumors like those reached even the first island. After all, every time someone left this realm it was a grand showing. Everyone could see that the individual in question succeeded, so for there to be no such showings for so many years, it was obvious that the test was nigh impossible.

Harold couldn't tell Damien everything, as he spent all of his time on the first island. However, he could spread the necessary information for a newcomer to learn the ropes.

Harold seemed different from the rest. People like those bandits Damien met earlier had succumbed to their imprisonment and were acting out some sort of society to cope. Harold also didn't have the talent to reach the next island, but instead of resigning, he decided to guide newcomers so they didn't share his fate.

He told Damien the rumors that plagued this land, the theories that had been collectively created about the concept they were all trying to comprehend, and the rules of this place.

He gave his junior enough knowledge to survive on his own.

'So those guys weren't being bandits for no reason.'

On the first island, it was just about energy accumulation. It was a simple step that could be taken by ninety percent of people.

In this place, one could accumulate energy in many ways, but the easiest was obviously to steal it from others.

Unfortunately, with this island's population being so small, it was rare for one to have the opportunity to steal from others. When Damien arrived, he was a clear target for the most desperate of people.

Even his small amount of energy would be something meaningful to those who could barely accumulate anything. 'For the first step, the meaning behind Nonexistence has been removed. This is meant to make us treat it like just another energy and to take away the mystery around it that makes it hard to grasp.'

This was the very issue Damien struggled with most as he tried to find a first step to comprehending Nonexistence.

'It's a funnel.'

The entire mechanism was meant to help them get closer to Nonexistence. It just funneled out those unworthy in the process. If Damien could treat Nonexistence like any other concept, then he would be able to conquer it without a problem.

Hell, he had the same problem with Existence back when he first came to the Heavenly World.

If it weren't for the Unrecorded setting him on the right path, he would have never progressed past the point where his father was halted.

That was why Damien never looked for the other legacy sites of the Unrecorded. He left them for any potential Absolute who would rise in the future, so that they would have the guidance they needed to reach past their bounds.

This realm of Nonexistence, a place that seemed to be created by the concept's own desire to be recognized, was the same kind of guide as the Unrecorded.

Harold allowed Damien to use the extra room in his home until he got his thoughts together.

By the time a day passed in Damien's perception, he was already ready to leave.

"Thank you for your kindness. I won't forget it," Damien said as they bid farewell.

"It isn't anything like that," Harold said with a smile.

"I just want to be able to say that I helped in the creation of a Supreme Being."

Damien smiled as well. He could say it however he wanted, but it was true that this man had a surprisingly pure heart for someone who reached this point in power. Perhaps his stay in this realm changed him.

"I saw that you have an interest in drinks. Since you allowed me to taste the fruits of your homeland, I have also left a concoction of mine for you. Enjoy it while you wait. I'll make sure you can brag all you want in the future."

Damien couldn't guarantee anything to a man like Harold. For now, Harold was stronger than him and more knowledgeable than him. As the islands didn't allow one to move backward, only forward, he wouldn't be able to share his findings with Harold to help him progress his power.

The most he could do was give him a gift and a promise. A promise that he would see the light of ascension coming from the fifth island sooner rather than later.

Damien and Harold shook hands with matching smiles. That was the last time they'd ever see each other.

It was a brief encounter with a man who wanted to be a guide, but it was meaningful only in its finitude.

There wasn't a particular direction Damien wanted to travel in. The island was uniformly made of rolling hills. It was definitely not small, but it wasn't large either.

Still, with the awareness of an ordinary person, it was massive. Damien couldn't fly anymore, but relying on his physical body, he could run incredibly fast. He allowed his feet to take him away until he ended up on the island shore, looking out beyond the Sea of Nothingness at the second island beyond.

'Okay.'

He was calm. It was a surprising situation, but that was the end of it.

From start to finish, Damien had that kind of mentality.

He would either succeed or lose everything.

No, it was impossible to lose everything. He wouldn't allow it.

He had to succeed.

There was no other option in this life.

For the sake of the ambition that had been driving him since the very first instances of his journey as a practitioner, he would succeed.

Even in places where everyone else failed.

Chapter 1786 Land of Nothingness [2]

'So, accumulating energy...'

According to Harold, it could be done in multiple ways.

The easiest aside from stealing was still stealing.

People died often in this realm. Sometimes, people would even commit suicide and erase their memories so they could be reborn as entirely different people.

No matter how they died, they would always revive. The concept of death didn't exist in this place, but one's existence could absolutely be wiped by the world itself. It didn't happen often, but if a practitioner tried to touch things they weren't meant to touch, it was a method the realm would occasionally enact.

If a practitioner died without having their existence erased, their energy would disperse into the world. The fifth island especially was filled with this energy. It was a battleground for the Ancients who apparently reached the level of Nonexistence easily.

This was where they killed each other and ruined the prosperity they had experienced until then.

To this day, as the environment remained unchanged as change was not a concept that could exist here, that energy remained.

Damien sat on the shore and looked out into the Sea of Nothingness because he believed that this place had the thickest energy across the entire island.

And, he wanted to see it for himself.

'Harold said that if I touch the water, I die.'

It was genuinely a manifested nothingness, so obviously anyone who had not dominated the concept would die if they came in contact with it. Even to leave the island they needed to use the energy they collected to fly across the sea, hoping they had enough to take them the entire way.

If their energy ran dry and they plummeted, they'd be wiped from the world. Most of those who stayed on the first island did so out of fear of that outcome.

Or so it was said, but Damien didn't buy it.

'Isn't this a place without convention? If even "change" doesn't exist, then why would "distance?"'

The Sea of Nothingness made sense. If it wanted to be separate from Existence yet still a concept that could be comprehended, then the Sea of Nothingness had to exist to give people a tangible thing to grab onto.

However, hypothetically, any amount of energy should have been enough to cross it.

'Isn't it just a matter of perception?'

If Damien had to pick what the core concept of Nonexistence that he'd learned in these few months was, it was "subjectivity."

Nonexistence changed based on one's position in life. One's experiences dictated what the concept could mean, and the concept responded by incorporating those aspects into its form.

To a child who never saw light, light did not exist. To a person who did not perceive distance, distance did not exist.

Damien stood up somewhat subconsciously and hovered his foot over the sea.

His eyes dilated, and as the environment blurred, he saw the foot of the second island approaching him.

'Nonexistence...'

Damien frowned.

'...is it even a thing?'

Did it even exist?

It seemed like a stupid question, but if it didn't exist, then there was nothing to perceive.

'Then, Nonexistence is only what you make of it. It is the same kind of impossibility that Existence represents, but it fills in the gaps in its peer. It was never meant to just be the opposite of Existence, was it?'

They came into being at the same time. For one to exist, the other had to be present as well. Since Existence took everything that could be perceived and its weight increased so much, Nonexistence was forced to follow somehow.

In order to balance Existence, it took on everything that Existence considered impossible and turned itself into a true concept.

That kind of concept...

It was the hardest to understand, but the easiest to understand.

It was impossible to comprehend until the moment one realized just how simple everything was at its core.

'Huh, but that's not really simple, is it?'

It sounded easy saying it out loud, but how was one to come to that conclusion without context? It was simply impossible, just like everything else related to the concept.

For Damien to reach it this soon...perhaps he was just talented. Nevertheless, despite seeing the second island right in front of him, he didn't leave immediately.

'It may be useful to accumulate a little first.'

It may have been, but...

'...why don't I want to?'

Damien immediately took back his decision to accumulate. Something told him that it was the wrong thing to do.

As he thought back to the Nonexistence the bandits and Harold controlled and examined their differences, he realized that absorbing the energy of others would not be the best course of action.

It was fine for other people, as they just wanted to comprehend Nonexistence in any form.

They consumed it in any form they could find. By doing so, they got stronger much faster than they would have otherwise, but their paths would be constrained.

They would become like the Dark God, people who controlled both concepts separately because they refused to come together,

Damien wanted more than that. He wanted his own perfect Nonexistence that melded perfectly with his Existence.

After all, his goal was even grander than theirs. He didn't just want to control the two. His final goal was to control the Void itself and reach the potential he was birthed with.

Would he attain that by absorbing other people's energy and allowing their comprehensions to pollute his own?

Even in the past, he seldom made use of the comprehensions of the beings he devoured. When he did, he interpolated them into his own techniques.

This was the same. Instead of letting his power be a mesh of several other people, he wanted it to be purely his own.

'And if my theories about Nonexistence are correct, then accumulation is useless from the beginning.'

It was never a necessity.

Perhaps the mechanism was only put in place to help people reach the same conclusion Damien did.

He had retracted his foot before, but it was already hovering over the water again.

"Distance" didn't exist.

"Death" didn't exist.

As all of the things standing in Damien's way were banished into Nonexistence, the second island approached until there was no water separating him from it at all.

He took a step that the thirty people on the first island were unable to take.

And he left them behind.

The first island had been conquered in just a single day.

However, if that was the tutorial area, then this was the main game. The following four islands would be progressively more difficult until the trial was almost impossible.

Still, Damien stepped onto the second island with far more confidence than he had before. Technically, he'd only realized one little thing.

That one little thing seemed small from an outside perspective.

Yet, that one little thing was more important than anything else the realm would teach him.

With it in his grasp, he felt like he could finally make use of Nonexistence.

And, as long as Damien Void had access to a concept, he would absolutely comprehend it.

That was the Legend he created as the Hegemon God.

Chapter 1787 Land of Nothingness [3]

Damien didn't have to look far to see how different the second island was from the first. Rather than small wooden cabins, the buildings here were made of stone and concrete. There were several castles across the land that were built by the many people who had come to this place over the years.

There were established roads, and Damien couldn't see the end of the island with his eyes. It was clearly much, much larger than its predecessor.

There was also a considerable difference in the aura of this place. It was definitely filled with the same energy as the first island, but it was also filled with the aura of life. Already, the population had ballooned in comparison. There had to be several thousand people living on the island at the very least.

It was a little bit soul-crushing to realize this kind of scale. All of these people also reached Existence?

All of them were also aiming to reach Nonexistence?

This was supposed to be a sacred seat that not just anyone could sit on, but looking at the crowds of people Damien could see walking the roads despite just arriving, he couldn't really think of it the same way.

Was it really that easy to reach the place he had to struggle so hard to climb to?

'No.'

It wasn't easy. Not in the slightest. Damien's struggle could actually be considered nothing compared to what someone without his inborn talents would have to go through to reach the same height.

Merely, the Land of Nothingness was a realm without time. People did not age, and people did not die.

Everyone here had been here for a very long time. According to Harold, it had been millions of years since they saw their last newcomer.

Which meant that these people were millions, billions, or perhaps even trillions of years old.

They came from different points in time that would never align as the cosmos they came from would never interact with each other.

If the True Void Universe was relatively young, then some of these people could potentially be older than its birth. And it didn't stop there.

Some of these people, in a sense, came from the future. They came from a time that Damien hadn't experienced yet and then spent millions of years in this place. The entire timeline was inconsequential, as anyone and everyone who tried to wield the two energies of Existence and Nonexistence together would be brought to this land.

It wasn't that Damien's path was easy. Damien's path wasn't common either.

None of these people ever thought of reaching the Void. They only thought of controlling the two forces most powerful under it.

After all, anyone who experienced the Void would understand that it was too unfathomable for anyone to control. All existing concepts and all nonexistent concepts became null yet were at the same time fully supported. The pure juxtaposition and dichotomy presented by an all-encompassing entity like the Void simply could not be grasped by the human mind.

'I need to stop doubting myself. I know it's only happening because I've come so far, but seriously, it's getting old.'

Regardless of the justification, doubt was not something Damien would allow into his life.

Not at this stage, not in the future.

He took a few more steps onto the second island. It wasn't as hilly as the first island, but the landscape was similar. There weren't too many trees, but the ones that existed came in all shapes and sizes, none that Damien recognized.

'I shouldn't bank on finding another guide like Harold. That's a newbie exclusive experience.'

The second island was definitely going to be more competitive than the first. The first island's small population forced it to be calm. This place had a large population, all of whom were in competition.

People like the five hooligans from before would show up everywhere. However, Damien would have to deal with them himself if a new group ever appeared.

'Haa, it's a little annoying, but...'

It was a good time to experiment a little.

'How am I supposed to find somewhere to experiment around here?'

He didn't know what kind of currency they used, if any. He didn't want to be in a place with too many people in case his movements attracted attention from unsavory characters.

Unfortunately, this was not a mountainous region, and Damien highly doubted that there was any sort of underground ecosystem. 'I guess I can figure something out.'

Not having access to any sort of mana was extremely inconvenient. However, even this was a good chance for Damien to practice.

'This must be why they built those castles and stuff. Using their power on this realm to influence it is extremely beneficial to their training.'

Damien went over the crest of the hill he was on and into the small valley between it and the elevated land where the closest road was. Putting his hand against the geological structure, he attempted to use Nonexistence to his advantage. 'Barriers do not exist.'

Anything that barred him from his goal was banished into Nonexistence.

Suddenly, a large hole roughly ten feet tall and nearly as wide opened in the hill. The hill itself also changed as it was forced to accommodate Damien's "creation."

'So that works.' Damien thought with a smile.

'Then, can I be bolder with it?'

He willed it with his body, forcing those things that blocked him into Nonexistence. In some sort of twisted way, he was able to use elements of creation with the new energy.

A shoddy cave abode was the result of his efforts. It was large enough to fit him and didn't alert people to his presence. He couldn't necessarily conceal himself from other Nonexistence users, but it was enough if he just moved covertly and kept his energy quiet.

He gathered an invisible aura around him. It did not have a particular quality or quantity. It could not be felt or seen. It was merely there.

As it formed a barrier around him, a territory that it could influence, he enacted the laws of Nonexistence.

'Ignorance...does not exist in my mind.'

It was something he firmly believed. He always knew exactly what was happening in the world as long as he wanted to know. Ignorance was a concept that was not allowed to affect him anymore, and he used that belief to power his energy.

The goal of this move was obvious.

Damien wanted to stretch the limits of conceptual energy manipulation, and he wanted to see just how much he could twist things in his favor.

Ignorance. The concept that could be equated simply to the "lack of knowledge."

When it was removed from the territory entirely...

Well, the realm itself was forced to give Damien any and all information he desired.

Nonexistence was not a power with levels or progression. In the first place, those concepts could not dictate such an esoteric force.

Nonexistence, once attained, would mold to its users and allow anything they could possibly imagine.

As such, the limit to one's power with the concept stood only with the limit of one's creativity.

Damien...was never such a creative person.

But when he was put in contact with such a nonsensically broken form of energy, everything changed.

His mind was burning with ideas, and his body was burning to test them.

First, however, he needed to focus on the "condition" of the second island.

Chapter 1788 Land of Nothingness [4]

The goal of the first island was just as plain as the first in context, but it was definitely more involved.

After all, to achieve it, one needed a considerable understanding of Nonexistence.

That statement was already contradictory, but the challenge for this island was just the same.

There were so many castles because the goal was to "create" as much as possible before moving to the next island.

One could easily pass the trial by building anything out of materials like stone or concrete. However, the more one did, the more benefits one would receive on the third island.

Still, the most people could build was castles. They were intricate inside and out and had to be completely created through methods similar to carving statues out of blocks of marble. Nonexistence couldn't create. It was a concept diametrically opposed to the facets of creation. However, even Damien managed to understand how to maneuver around that handicap. It took a lot of finesse to perfectly manipulate Nonexistence to be able to do something against its nature. One would have to use several different skills, banishing specific concepts into nothingness to allow other concepts to shine.

Complicated, right?

It really was. All Damien did at first was dig a hole and make the hill a little bigger, but even that took four different steps to execute.

What he accomplished in that hole was a bit more extraordinary though. A lot of people were able to think of similar things. To banish ignorance and gain all possible information was pretty much an idea that came to each and every person who attained the same enlightenment as Damien.

However, it wasn't as easy as he made it look.

With Existence under one's control, banishing anything into Nonexistence was possible. They could directly manipulate their minds so that their beliefs were absolutely true no matter what. In that state, everything could become nothingness.

Say Damien tried to banish his love for his family into Nonexistence because he was going through an emo god phase. No matter what he tried, unless he altered his own memories to make it true, he wouldn't be able to accomplish it.

There simply wasn't a way for him to believe that he didn't have love for his family. It was impossible for him to distance himself from them.

In this realm where that kind of mind alteration was impossible, it was equally impossible for Damien to have that emo-god phase.

It was a crude example, but it worked the same way for everything. It was nigh impossible for anyone to convince themselves that they weren't ignorant. Unless they had absolute confidence that bordered on insane arrogance, how could they say that the entire world was in their grasp?

For people who used Existence, it was a little different as the entire world was in their grasp, but after spending years on the first island acclimating to the fact that Existence was unavailable in this place, they had all lost the blatant arrogance they received from the concept.

They could no longer fully believe that it was impossible for them to be ignorant after experiencing a twisted realm like this one.

It wasn't that Damien was the only different one, but he was definitely different from the norm.

Firstly, he hadn't been on the first island for more than a day. His mind hadn't been tarnished by its conditions.

Secondly, unlike most who only received such abilities when they gained Existence, Damien spent a long time "devouring."

Whether it was power, memories, or existence, Damien was accumulating other beings inside of his mind for a very long time.

Because of that, he established a unique sense of identity and mental fortitude in this specific aspect, and he developed a specific confidence in always being informed or having the ability to gain information.

As such, when it came time to banish ignorance from his reality, Damien was able to attain exactly what he desired.

...to an extent.

'Really, that's it?'

Unfortunately, he only gained a little bit of information. He saw the trial of the second island and he saw the lives of the people who lived here in the past, present, and future.

But that was it.

He wasn't able to pierce the secrets of the realm, but that was not possible in the first place. Information on the realm didn't exist. And, with the Sea of Nothingness blocking him, he couldn't access anything about the third island and beyond.

Seriously, this was a realm very unfriendly to the people within.

'Not that it doesn't make sense.'

When everyone who ever came was a Supreme Being, going easy and allowing easy ways out was silly. These were people who needed to remember what it was like to struggle so they would never forget the feeling in the event that they became Absolutes in the future.

Damien stayed in the cave for a decent amount of time. He didn't do much else after trying to gain omniscience, but he wanted to see if he had properly concealed himself from the masses.

Several minutes passed and nobody appeared. When several hours passed, Damien knew there was not a problem.

'It takes me back, being this cautious.'

In a plane where he didn't know what others could do, he couldn't walk around arrogantly. He once again had to conceal himself and slowly grow so that others couldn't challenge him.

It wasn't just about the limits of creativity. It was about the bounds of one's ability.

Damien had only discovered the basic side of Nonexistence. He could banish concepts into Nonexistence as long as he properly willed for it.

However, could he bring things out of Nonexistence? Could he use the energy itself without a medium?

He was absolutely sure that he didn't have enough control to call himself strong in this realm yet. Plus, his physical power wouldn't be enough now that he was surrounded by people who could make better use of nothingness.

If someone banished his physical strength, then it would not exist on their battlefield. Without Existence, Damien wouldn't be able to counter and bring it back.

'I can worry about that situation later. The second island is relatively calm. Territory battles only happen if people try to build inside each other's land. If I just pick a relatively secluded area, I'll be fine.'

It would be nice if he could avoid fighting for as long as possible so he could learn. Once he got a little more comfortable with Nonexistence, he could have some more fun.

Before that, he left his cave abode and followed the roads.

'There are two cities on this island.'

They were on opposite sides. Most people decided to start in the cities where they could use small plots of land to practice their creation skills. If they were able to succeed by the skin of their teeth, then they'd leave the island from there and their presence would be immortalized in the structure they built.

It was a bit more difficult for people who wanted larger plots of land.

Technically, the entire island had been divided up. Every inch of it was owned by individuals who said they would build castles but never actually became powerful enough to do so.

If anyone tried to build on their empty land, they would raise a fuss. When they raised a fuss, usually it started a war until one person died too many times to care anymore.

As the people who owned the island had been living on it for longer than those trying to steal, they were able to defend their claims easily.

Damien either had to challenge them for a claim or find a piece of land that they did not yet know of.

'And of the two...I don't really know which one is easier.'

Well, that was for him to find out from now on.

But he really didn't think he'd be able to avoid fighting for too much longer.

Chapter 1789 Land of Nothingness [5]

How long did it take Damien to traverse the island on foot?

That was a good question, and he was on a quest to find out.

He used the roads at first to get to the eastern city. The two locations were never given names because their entire existence was impermanent. He was only planning to pass through to get to the very easternmost coast, but he wanted to at least see how others were living.

The island told him that the cities were filled with people showcasing their own forms of Nonexistence as they worked on their creations. Was that not something he'd want to see?

Damien followed the road on his own two feet for a decent distance.

There were a lot of travelers like him. Not many had forms of transportation. Those who did were obviously using them to earn money.

The currency of this place was energy. To gain convenience, one was forced to sacrifice the fruits of one's efforts.

Naturally, ninety percent of the population refused to fork over their hard-earned energy. They would rather walk the long distances, even if it took months or years to get from one side of the island to the other.

It didn't matter at the end of the day. Without time, they could spend as much as they wanted without having to worry about when they'd return home.

Damien was the same.

The Dark God had no influence here. He couldn't change whether Damien came back at the same time he left or too late. The other Damien was still in the Heavenly World leading things. Even if the timeline wasn't frozen, everything would be fine.

He would arrive right then and there, just a few months into the war. And he would return as an entirely different person.

He smiled as he thought of this as another vacation, but it definitely wouldn't take as long as Arulion did.

Regardless of how safe he was here, he couldn't just leave the Dark God behind. He needed to get rid of that threat as soon as possible so he could live happily in the real future.

This was not a place where he wanted to get used to being.

Nevertheless, Damien spent the next few "years" traversing the second island. He didn't build anything, but he became familiar with its situation in general. Many people saw him and acknowledged him. He was the only new person here in millions of years as well, so he stood out a lot.

As he was not trying to do anything at all, people assumed that he'd given up and was trying to find a way to accept that this world was his new home.

Many of them sympathized with that feeling, so Damien was treated well. Whenever he went places, people often helped him out and gave him free meals or lodging. Of course, that treatment would change when he started building, but he didn't mind it. Everyone here was talented. It was worth making friends with the ones who didn't change.

By the time his few-year-long journey was over, Damien found himself back in the same place he started, sighing.

'I mean, it exists.'

There was indeed a piece of land unclaimed by anyone.

'The problem is that I'll start a war if I take it.'

That land was in the northwest of the island. It took Damien quite a while to reach.

It was one of the most nature-filled areas that even had its own ecosystem of "living beings."

They were just manifestations of nothingness. They were also the reason the territory remained unclaimed.

That place, Death's Hold, was exactly as it was named. Anyone who tried to use that land to build was forced out. Those who refused to leave would have their existences erased.

Damien visited it himself during his travels. The beings there were curious, but they did not meaninglessly attack anyone.

He didn't try exerting his power, but he assumed that was the key to their aggression.

'It'll be difficult to build there even if there's no opposition. The problem lies with the fact that Death's Hold is extremely desirable, all things considered.'

The people who had been here the longest, the Lords who lived in the many castles strewn across this land, had been eyeing the land for eons.

They were never able to conquer it, so it had been disregarded, but what would happen if Damien randomly arrived and succeeded where they'd failed?

'Still, it's really the only option. They'll all come after me eventually, so it's not like it's worth anything to delay it.'

At least if he chose Death's Hold, he would have a decent amount of time before anyone discovered what he was up to.

'And if I can actually make use of the environment...'

If Death's Hold properly became his territory, then he would no longer have to worry about opposition.

Would anyone be brave enough to intrude on a land guarded by beasts that antithesize their existence?
'No. They won't.'

In fact, Damien was already back in Death's Hold by the time he finished thinking about it.

There were conveniences within Nonexistence as well. If he just negated the distance he traveled, then with time and change being nonexistent, he could teleport himself back to a location he'd already been.

The forest was dark. It was filled with a purple mist and even the trees all had dark purple or black colors making up their form. The beasts didn't stand out. They were made of the same colors as if to blend into the environment and catch their prey off-guard.

Damien could tell that he was being watched by many. They would not move unless they were provoked.

'How do I start building without pissing them off?'

There had to be some sort of secret in Death's Hold.

Death's Hold existed. That was enough proof. In a landscape filled with emptiness and nothingness, a unique area meant the world.

Why were the highest authorities obsessed with it? What value did a land of nothingness have?

Nobody knew, but everyone could assume.

Whether it was treasure or comprehension, it was worth finding. Many adventurers were attracted to the location when it was first discovered. They'd only stopped because so much time had passed and the number of new people was nil.

Damien sat down amidst the eerie scenery.

He closed his eyes and tried to connect his senses with the environment.

Once again, he was attempting something that others failed at time and time again.

Only, he didn't necessarily have any advantages here. The only thing he could rely on was his unique thought process. That was the same thing everyone relied on when they came to this place.

As he closed his eyes, all Damien felt was darkness.

A deep darkness beyond even what the Sea of Nothingness contained. 'Is this...really supposed to be on the second island?'

Damien glanced into it and immediately felt himself getting overwhelmed.

His prior thoughts were confirmed.

The Nonexistence he contained now was meager in front of the real thing.

The people on the third, fourth, and fifth islands would slowly show him forms similar to or more powerful than this...?

Damien's brow furrowed.

He needed to put in real-time on the second island.

He couldn't just skip past it like the first.

If he tried...

...then he would probably be screwed, right?

Chapter 1790 Land of Nothingness [6]

Damien's first step was to "understand" once again.

It was the most important thing in this realm, but he was doing it a little differently this time.

He wanted to know what this place was purely out of curiosity. Sure, he wanted to exploit it, but that was meaningless to his current efforts. He was being sincere and honest with the world in hopes that it wanted to see that from him.

In most cases, those with pure intentions would always flourish. Human emotion polluted the connection between people and the world. That wasn't necessarily always a bad thing, but when trying to reach the world to this degree, it was better to empty the mind of such thoughts.

In essence, entering a state of nothingness. It was a little bit of a coincidence for Damien to choose this direction. However, it was indeed what he needed to do.

The deep blackness he saw changed and morphed into the figure of a woman in a white dress. She had incredibly pale, almost translucent skin and a pair of eyes hazed over by clouds of grey. She glowed just slightly like an entity with no physical form. Perhaps it was because she didn't exist in the first place.

Damien immediately understood that the woman was just the physical manifestation of a concept. The changes taking place in her were meant to be interpreted by those who witnessed them. The woman walked, her bare feet causing ripples in the ankle-deep black water. She didn't seem to have a direction, but the further she went, the more the environment changed.

Trees of the same color as the water rose from the blackness. They were only a shade lighter than the void of nothingness, so they were difficult to perceive if one wasn't paying attention.

Before Damien's eyes, the pure white woman moved through the pure black forest. As she continued, the water crept up her legs and hid them from the world. For a moment, they continued to shine subtly, though they were eventually consumed by the blackness.

The water turned material and climbed up the woman's body, wrapping around her left half like vines. The vines sunk into her skin, tainting the purity of her appearance. In only a few seconds, she had become a picture of yin and yang, harboring a deep blackness along with her original self.

The two halves of the woman's body fought. The whiteness tried to keep its form as much as possible. The blackness tried to take as much as it could, greedy for more regardless of how much it had.

It seemed like the woman would be consumed by darkness at any moment.

However, it never happened.

The blackness and the whiteness fought for a very long time, but eventually, they settled in their own halves of her body.

Unfortunately, by the time it happened, the woman was already dead.

The two sides panicked as they lost their host. They understood their power and understood that they wouldn't have any purpose without a host.

The woman's corpse shined with two opposing lights. They stayed together, unable to break apart, and found themselves unable to exert power unless they did so in tandem.

The matter of the woman's body was broken down and reconstructed. A new being rose from the ashes, half black and half white. It no longer had a gender or a pure form, but it had a different kind of beauty that had to be acknowledged.

It walked. As it walked, the black forest changed. Half of it turned pure white, and the other half turned an even darker shade of black.

The world gained a sort of equilibrium, but only at the expense of that innocent woman.

However, her corpse no longer existed. Her mark on the world was erased, replaced with only those two forms. The illusion faded away from Damien's mind. Once it returned to the familiar darkness that represented his lack of thoughts, he opened his eyes.

'So that was...something.'

Damien took a breath.

In a picture like that, it was easy to see the darkness as the villain.

The whiteness had existed in that woman from the start. It was easy to see it as an innocent entity in the entire story.

Even when the woman died, it was stuck with the blackness and led along into a new form. If one was biased towards the whiteness from the beginning, then the story could be interpreted entirely differently.

Perhaps Damien would've possessed a similar outlook if it was a different situation. However, if the story was like that, how could it possibly relate to Death's Hold?

Damien tried to view it through a different lens.

Say that woman was once ordinary. Say she was just a vessel. Say the whiteness possessed her a very long time ago. Say it was the very thing that led her into the blackness in the first place.

Say the blackness and the whiteness were always meant to be one.

What if the woman was merely used as a conduit for that union?

The way Damien interpreted it, the scene seemed to depict something like order and chaos. Two opposing forces of the universe without defined forms that realized they needed a host to continue functioning.

It was a story about the beginning of everything, when "Existence" decided to manifest itself as a world that could be viewed, while Nonexistence remained a black forest that melded into the background and went unseen despite being the other half of the picture.

It was curious. The formation of everything definitely didn't happen like that. Existence never found Nonexistence through a medium. They were born together as two halves of the same entity when the Void decided to define itself. Who created this storyline?

What was its purpose?

'The black forest has to be the same as this one. The form is different, but the nothingness I saw when I first connected to the environment is the exact same as that one.'

Hell, the scene itself manifested inside of that nothingness. It was hard to realize or distinguish it from any other blackness as it had no aura, but since Damien recognized its particularity, he never forgot.

So, then, if this was a forest created through the events of the story, if it was the mirror of a forest that called Existence its home...

'...what does it even mean?'

Right, there was no way that was enough information for Damien to garner anything, but it was a good start nonetheless.

Damien stood up from there. He looked around, meeting eyes with the beasts that watched him.

They growled menacingly. Their voices were deep and guttural, striking fear in the hearts of the fearless.

This was the exact point when others who tried the same thing died.

They interpreted the story in a specific way and decided to act upon it. When they made the wrong decision, the black forest rebelled.

'I'll die too.'

Damien was once again mortal in more ways than one. Here, even he could die.

'Well, that's if the Void doesn't want to save me again. Considering that it was for the sake of the physique's awakening, I doubt it's willing to do it a second time.'

He joked to himself, but he was known to stay jovial.

He had to make his next move very carefully.

He had to act with absolute certainty that his interpretation of the story was the right one.

Otherwise, he would be no different than any of the rest.

He, in all forms, would be wiped from all Existence.