

## Void 1801

Chapter 1801 Third Island [4].

The third island. From here, things became more complicated.

When Damien used the same strategy to gain information about the third island as a whole, he found that Kura had indeed given him the basics of survival.

In essence, it was exactly as she said. He could follow a path and challenge anyone he saw until he reached the platinum badge level. After receiving his platinum badge, he could choose between any of the six Area Lords to fight for a chance to move to the next island.

The Area Lord position never consistently remained in a single person's hands. Hell, even the Area Lords themselves didn't abuse their power or obsess over it.

As Damien expected, the people on this island had begun to cope with their reintroduced emotions. They returned to their rationality, though they still made rash actions on occasion.

Nevertheless, Area Lords only took that position for the sake of their own training. As they fought and fought and fought, they reached a level of familiarity with Nonexistence that was absolutely crucial before moving on to the fourth island.

This was the separation point between those who had a chance of escaping and those who didn't. There was nothing more vital on this island than preparation and future planning.

'The problem is that they aren't allowed to lose intentionally.'

If a practitioner decided to take hold of that position, they couldn't just give it up when they felt bored or tired.

According to the rules of this island, they had to try their best to defeat the challengers that came to them. Only when they were defeated naturally could they relinquish their position and move on.

'I don't think I should take it, since I don't think I would be able to naturally lose to anyone.'

After a moment of random arrogance, Damien frowned.

'The politics are what make this island particularly difficult.'

Similarly to the second island, there was a status quo in society. Unsimilar to its predecessor, however, was the ability of practitioners on the third island to raise their status.

This was just like the societies in the outside world in many ways. As long as one had the sufficient power and ability, anything was possible.

Still, Kura probably wasn't a wanderer if she believed that it was easy to find opponents to fight against.

There were three main organizations on this island that every practitioner was forced to choose between.

The Fire Temple, the Water Temple, and the Earth Temple.

They weren't based on what element one used since elements were inconsequential here. It was more about the kind of people one wanted to be surrounded by.

The Fire Temple was filled with people who liked to fight head-on and run wild. They had brasher personalities and fiery tempers, though that didn't mean they were bad people.

They were just the most extroverted and open of the three temples. This faction was made to attract people who regained their fiery hearts along with the rest of their emotions.

The Water Temple had a much calmer atmosphere. The people there liked to ponder over decisions before making them and fight in an orderly manner. They planned their steps and walked a careful path to ensure that they didn't make any mistakes.

In a sense, they were the antithesis of the people from the Fire Temple. Their demeanors were silent and calm like flowing water in a stream.

Oddly enough, though, it wasn't rare for members of the Fire and Water Temples to attract each other with their perfectly opposing personalities.

Finally, the Earth Temple was somewhere in the middle. Its people were like monks. They focused on training more than anything else and rarely spoke. They were worldly people without worldly desires who treated all others with the respect they deserved.

Of course, they were not pacifists by any means. The people of the Earth Temple could be as hot-headed as Fire Temple members if they wanted to, and they could plan like Water Temple members if they wanted to.

The reason they chose the Earth Temple despite these traits was because it adhered more to their principles.

It was a place to go if one valued being grounded over all else. It was a different kind of calm than water and a different kind of brashness than fire.

The three temples actually weren't enemies in any sense. Their people competed with each other, but there were never any hard feelings between them, barring personal feuds between individuals.

The three temples only existed out of necessity.

On this island, halfway through the five, "history" was starting to once again become a concept.

People were able to influence time to a degree that was impossible on the former islands, which meant that "change" could be enacted freely.

The Ancient Era where practitioners who gained control over Existence were plenty; the records of the wars that broke out in that era existed on this island.

The history of blood that formed the atmosphere of this environment was troubling. If people ran around wantonly and challenged anyone they came across, the entire island would fall into chaos.

A chaotic state like that was a net negative to the island's environment. Only a few people could come out of it victorious, and in a place like this, it was better to make it so that as many as possible could succeed and move on.

They were not enemies. They were competitors. Friendly competition was not competition where people dragged others down to win.

It required an atmosphere of relative cooperation and respect. People had to recognize others as rivals and contribute to their growth the same way others contributed to theirs.

That was simply impossible without governing entities keeping the peace.

Wanderers didn't have an easy time only because people wouldn't accept challenges from people who didn't wear the emblem of one of the three temples. That was the order created in this society.

This information led to another question.

Why did Damien think it was going to be troublesome?

It wasn't as if he would face heavy opposition. He would have to choose an influence, but he wasn't going to be heavily controlled or regulated. He didn't plan to cause chaos, so he didn't have anything to worry about.

The reason for Damien's struggle was a bit more on the comedic side this time.

'Shit. I'm going to have to interact with people.'

Was there ever a story about how antisocial Gods were?

If so, Damien certainly hadn't read it.

He was fine with family. The people he already knew still had the same value in his heart and mind as they did before he became so powerful.

Making new connections, though...

It was something Damien dreaded a little bit.

'I mean, come on. There isn't much left for me to do in the Heavenly World, and there aren't many new people for me to meet. Everyone I do end up meeting is either an enemy or someone I have to treat as lower than me because that's how they consider themselves.'

The only people who felt comfortable interacting with him casually were the people he had known for a long time.

Whenever he went back to Void Palace, he'd find Long Chen, Su Ren, and Yong An to have drinks and catch up. They were fine with trashing him and joking with him despite him being the strongest person in the cosmos.

After all, they were with him when he was just a kid or a talented genius. They didn't have fear because they knew him on a deeper level.

People who didn't had no interest in doing so.

They only felt discomfort when they had to treat Damien casually. If he acted casually, they showed fear because they didn't understand what kind of person he was.

Damien didn't care to put enough time into people to show them otherwise. Not anymore, at least.

As such, he'd become exactly what he feared.

'An antisocial God who forgot how to properly interact with people as equals.'

He sighed to himself.

"Haa..."

'...I guess even I have to learn some emotional stuff from this realm.'

He really didn't have a choice.

Damien Void had to go on a quest to learn how to talk to strangers.

Quite the unexpected development, was it not?

Chapter 1802 Third Island [5]

So, did the people of each temple have alliances with each other?

Were they forbidden from fighting amongst themselves?

The simple answer was no.

They were allowed to fight whoever they wanted as long as the other individual was also a member of a temple. The three temples only served to separate people so they could be more easily managed.

The heads of the temples were required to maintain good relationships with each other. The current heads were actually close friends. Under their command, chaos couldn't come to this island. Prosperity thrived because of the temples' existence. Civilization thrived in prosperity.

This landscape was not filled with castles made by people who only wanted to move on to the next island. It didn't just have two cities to contain the people who weren't allowed to build as they pleased.

The third island had the largest population of the five by a large margin.

As every Area Lord was stronger than the last, a great divide was formed on this island.

There were a large number of people who tried and tried again only to fail. When they accepted that they were not fated to leave this place, they conceded their badges and chose to make the best of their situations. As such, the third island was pretty much an entire nation led by the three temples.

There were millions upon millions of people living here, all of whom failed to conquer Nonexistence.

They were the main reason for the three temples' existence.

To give them better lives despite their unfortunate circumstances, and to ensure that chaos never threatened the beautiful civilization that arose because of them, the three temples moderated all active practitioners on the island.

Hell, even the Area Lords were managed by their people.

On that note, the society they'd built with their system was truly something to marvel at.

When Damien made it off the shore and started focusing on the island itself, even he was impressed.

How was he to describe it?

It only resembled the lands he'd been between in the fact that it was extremely developed, but it wasn't exactly similar to any of them.

Rather, it was like all different building styles from all different cosmos were brought together into a single picture.

The cities were large and sprawling. In their centers, they had skyscraper-like structures similar to Earth if it was given a few hundred more years to grow.

The buildings defied the laws of physics that humans created on that planet. Some were floating, others were spirals that seemed to contain too much tension to last for a long time, and others more had wild edges and curves that seemed more akin to a creative depiction of the future than reality.

The amazing part was how these buildings melded in with the rest of the environment.

Medieval architecture, gothic architecture, victorian architecture...

It was a little bit sentimental to see how the styles of other cosmos related to the styles Damien was already aware of. Really, regardless of where they were, humans were bound to follow a pattern.

But, there were obviously some who didn't like patterns at all. The architects of this society found a middle ground between the two belief systems and incorporated both into their cities.

It really looked like a hodgepodge of styles that didn't work together, but strangely enough, one could see a sense of order within the madness. There was a beauty to it that couldn't quite be explained.

'It wouldn't work if it weren't for the stray structures that don't follow any rules.'

As if they'd been created as markers for where the architectural styles changed and merged, there were several large structures visible from a distance that didn't conform to anything else done in the cities.

These were pieces created by individuals or small teams with the support of the general public.

'It's almost as if everything they wanted to accomplish on the second island but were too weak to do was completed here.'

Damien had to admire it.



There was nothing wrong with falling into depression after failure. Especially in a realm like this where failure meant never returning to normal life, it was actually common for experts to find locations like Death's Hold to kill them for good.

The people here chose a different path. They resigned to being here for eternity, but they did not resign to living in sadness.

Unlike the unwelcoming second island, the third had an entrance to the nearest city right off of the shore.

Damien and Kura's battle actually took place not even five minutes from that place.

It wasn't just some port city either. This was the home of the Water Temple and one of the three Grand Cities on the island.

The entire south of the island was filled with members of the Water Temple and people who chose to live under their reign.

The Fire Temple's territory was to the west, while the Earth Temple existed in the east.

Damien was walking through the city just to get a feel of the environment. It was definitely strange seeing street vendors and common people with the knowledge that everyone here had a relatively large amount of control over Nonexistence, but if that was how they chose to live their lives, then he didn't see a problem with it.

The most surprising thing he noticed was children.

'I didn't know this realm could support new life.'

It was probably the result of Nonexistence's emotions. Actions like these gave people a friendlier view of the concept, after all.

'Will those kids be stuck here for their entire lives?'

In a sense, they were no different from people who had never been outside of their own country. There wouldn't be any severe impact on their lives caused by the fact that they were trapped in this realm.

They didn't even know there was an outside world, so they were able to live happily.

And, they had a chance to make it out as well.

'They're unique. These children are born with an affinity for Nonexistence.'

They reached the more esoteric concept first. They could absolutely comprehend it to its heights and escape the realm where their parents were stuck.

Damien was extremely curious about what a kid like that would do when they made it to reality and saw the more visible side of the world. Would Existence accept them? Would they pursue it and become Absolute?

They were intriguing trains of thought, but he didn't plan to have children here, so it wasn't for him to learn.

More importantly, Damien had to decide which temple he wanted to join.

'Kura was probably part of the Water Temple considering her fighting style.'

Well, that was enough to cross the Water Temple off of the list.

'It's not like I hate her. I just have this sinking feeling that if I end up at the same temple as her, I'm not going to hear the end of it.'

She seemed like the type of person who'd chase a competitor for revenge over and over again until she won.

Damien didn't want to deal with that. He was being considerate, really.

The more she lost to him, the more she'd lose that gold badge that she worked so hard to earn.

The first catered more towards the old Damien. When he was young, he would have loved that kind of environment.

Meanwhile, the Earth Temple was more suitable for his current self. It was calm and peaceful. The people knew how to act brazenly when they had to, but they also understood that sometimes it was pointless to expend energy on trivial matters.

'We'll see about it. It'll definitely be interesting if she comes back after changing things up.'

But, that was a matter for another time.

'Between the Fire Temple and the Earth Temple...'

The first catered more towards the old Damien. When he was young, he would have loved that kind of environment.

Meanwhile, the Earth Temple was more suitable for his current self. It was calm and peaceful. The people knew how to act brazenly when they had to, but they also understood that sometimes it was pointless to expend energy on trivial matters.

The Land of Nothingness was many things for an expert on the path to becoming Absolute.

Among those many faces, one was its identity as a place of reminiscence.

The old emotions that were revived by the atmosphere; everyone knew that they'd have to discard most of them when they left for their own worlds.

So, they used this place to enjoy those emotions as much as possible before their (hopefully) inevitable departure.

The choice in Damien's hands now wasn't actually one of great importance.

It was more about what he wanted his experience in the Land of Nothingness to be defined by.

Did he want to see it as a place to kick back and disregard his duties for a little bit?

Or did he want to enjoy this atmosphere from the perspective of the person he was now?

It was a hard choice for many others, but Damien thought otherwise.

'I like who I am.'

He didn't miss his old self. After all, that part of him still existed inside of who he currently was.

There was only one choice for him from the beginning. As someone who accepted his changing personality without discarding the foundation on which it was built...

'...I have to go east.'

...the answer was obviously the Earth Temple.

Chapter 1803 Third Island [6]

Traveling was becoming easier by the day.

When crossing oceans, "distance" could be negated. Unfortunately, this strategy only worked if one knew one's destination exactly, so it wasn't practical for a journey like this one.

On the second island, people walked. Here, there was more development and change so people had vehicles and mounts. It also became more possible to traverse the lands by canceling distance in increments. Because there were always small towns within sight, one could go from place to place and make judgements more easily.

It was the benefit of a populated island.

Nevertheless, Damien didn't cancel distance to move. It was the most similar method to teleportation, so he could use it more efficiently than the average person, but it was also too much work. Why would he take the difficult approach when there were far easier methods?

As Damien was a wanderer, nobody was going to challenge him. He would have a relatively peaceful journey to the Earth Temple as long as he didn't run into stray beasts or living creations that other people accidentally let loose.

At a time like this, he figured that a road trip to see the sights would be better. He was going to enjoy this place as his current self, but even his current self quite liked the atmosphere of the third island.

It felt more like home. It was a real society, so of course Damien was going to explore it sufficiently in the time he spent as a part of it.

The third island had an established road system going through every city and town on its surface. Damien didn't know exactly where he was going, but getting lost and stopping in random towns to interact with the people and find his way was part of the fun.

Well, to be more precise, it was training to get a little better at small talk before he arrived at the temple. But that was something Damien would never admit.

'...it has to be a car.'

There were vehicles being sold by the denizens of this land, but none of them appealed to him.

When it came to land transport...

'...it has to be a car.'

Damien wasn't particularly a car geek, but he did love to drive for the little time that he was able to. He had experienced many vehicles over the years, of which his absolute favorite were some of the starships in Grand Heavens Boundary, but obviously those wouldn't be useful here.

Genuinely, Damien hadn't found a more entertaining form of land vehicle than the cars of Earth.

'That really says something about my homeworld's creativity.'

Maybe some of it came from the fact that it was a new world created and built by an Unrecorded, but the achievements of humanity belonged to only them.

'I'm lucky I gained the planet's memories when I linked with its core. Otherwise, I never would have been able to replicate what goes on inside.'

Damien held his hand out. The procedure undertaken was complicated, as creating each individual part of a car through roundabout methods took a lot of precision, but he was able to complete it eventually.

Having creative freedom at a time like this was amazing. The chassis belonged to a certain car from a luxury brand that existed on Earth already, but everything from the engine to the brake pads was entirely custom-made through his knowledge of the machines.

A slammed, matte-black beauty was formed on the road leading out of the first city.

'Nice.'

Damien got in the driver's seat and brushed his hands over the material of the steering wheel.

'Speaking of, I wonder how Earth is doing.'

It had been a long time since he checked up on his home planet.

'I should do it as soon as I regain access to the Sanctuary.'

That moment would come soon.

No, it would come the moment he returned to the Heavenly World.

The Dark God's ability only worked because he was using Nonexistence on a high level. When Damien returned with the same power, how could he possibly continue inhibiting his connection to the sub-universe?

Damien started his long drive from there. His car definitely stood out from the masses, but nobody paid much attention since everyone's vehicles stood out from the masses. If anything, people made note of the fact that he was able to recreate a vehicle from his home cosmos. When he joined a temple, he would be a serious competitor that they'd have to be wary of.

It would have been a twenty-hour drive if Damien went straight there, but with his consistent stops and the three times he took a wrong turn and drove tens of miles in the wrong direction, it took around two days for him to reach his destination.

The Water Temple was hidden within its city's architecture. When Damien was walking the streets, he hardly noticed it until he asked someone where it was and they pointed to a building right across the street from him. The Earth Temple, however, was very obvious.

There was a massive earthen column in the middle of the city. Calling it a column was a huge understatement when considering its size.

It was like an entire city block was raised out of the sky, and on top of it resided a beautiful temple of gold that seemed to be one with the sun.

'Oh yeah, there's a sun.'

It was artificially created, but it definitely contributed heavily to the kinder atmosphere of this island.

Damien scoffed in amazement as he stared up at the temple above.

'Nobody would ever think that this entire structure is mechanical.'

It made sense that they used an earthen column considering...well, Earth Temple, but they knew just as well as anyone else that raising it to such a height only made it inconvenient to reach.

In reality, the temple on top of the column was mostly for show.

The highest authorities and the Temple Master lived there, but the member residences, facilities, and everything else existed within the column itself.

The doors leading inside were themed to match the column. They were comically massive dirt and moss-covered behemoth pieces of stone that acted as sliding doors.

Only when they receded could one see the technological nature of the column's interior.

Damien walked in, staring up at the ceiling that was too far away to even be seen through normal means.

The entire circumference was populated with over a hundred different floors, but the central area remained hollow for most of the column's structure for the sake of a mystical lobby experience like the one Damien was having.



After being in operation for so long, the systems of these kinds of buildings had long been established, and a job system had been made for the normal residents of the island. Damien approached a front desk area where several attendants were dealing with the people who had business in the tower.

'That being said, there are more people than expected.'

People who wanted to return to battle, people who grew up in this realm and were only now entering temples and partaking in the island trial, and even newcomers from the second island who didn't have as efficient methods of transportation as Damien.

It seemed that the island's population was far more robust than he originally expected.

'And, I guess I'm about to be treated like a rookie again, huh?'

In order to become a member of the temple, Damien had to go through a test given by its staff.

However, thinking that he was going to be treated like a rookie was a bit much.

After all, even if it was a procedure that he hadn't experienced since he was weaker, he wasn't currently weak enough to have to suffer through it.

Just like everything else, he would be fine breezing through this test.

In fact, it was the Earth Temple that had to be thankful that he decided to choose them!

## Chapter 1804 Earth Temple [1]

It was just as expected.

After an hour of waiting in line, Damien finally got a chance to talk to the receptionist. Their conversation was quite streamlined as this was a process the Earth Temple went through at least a few tens of times a day.

"I have come to apply to be a member of the temple."

"Name?"

"Damien Void."

"Please take this ticket and have a seat. You will be expressly teleported to the trial area when it is your turn."

With a nod, Damien left and found a place to sit. There were quite a few seats in the lobby area. A lot of them were filled as well, likely by individuals related to the business side of the temple's operation.

Those who looked like him, who wore strange clothing compared to the rest and had an aura of war that hadn't yet faded, were few in number.

Damien could see only three others that gave off the feeling of an active competitor. 'It's as if we're the strange ones.'

It was odd. Even on Earth, after the World Awakening, Awakened individuals were the main class of society. People who lived average lives were seen as the minority.

Damien found a place that was more secluded so he could have some peace before he was summoned, but he obviously wasn't going to get that kind of freedom.

There was a strange thing about society. When everyone wanted to mind their own business, it was as if nobody existed. However, if someone decided to act indifferent in a place where others were hyper and curious, wouldn't they instead find themselves attracting more attention?

Damien saw that fighters were rare and decided that he wasn't going to interact with anyone.

The other fighters, however, were very curious about the new person who'd arrived at their temple.

"Hey!"

Damien's attention was caught by an approaching voice just seconds after he sat down.

"Sorry. You look like you don't want to talk to anyone, but I really can't help being curious. I've never seen you before. Are you new here?"

The person was a man with bright blonde hair that almost didn't seem real. He had blue eyes that sparkled on a young-looking face. In Damien's opinion, he couldn't have been more than twenty-four years old.

"Is it common to assume that someone is new just because you haven't seen them?" Damien responded.

"Yup! There aren't many of us in Terra. Every challenger is at least familiar with each other's names. I've never heard of you or seen you, so aren't you obviously from somewhere else?"

The man's response was instant.

Damien sighed. 'Troublesome guy.'

The man sat down next to him and crossed his arms.

"So? Who are you? Did you come from Alpheia? Nah, you don't seem like one of them. Maybe you're a Rivean? It has to be one of those two. Rural folk don't know how to dress like you."

Damien raised his brow.

'Does he think I'm one of the children who was born here?'

Alpheia was the name of the Water Temple city he walked through when he first arrived on the island. Rivea was the Fire Temple's main city and Terra was the same for the Earth Temple.

He spoke as if Damien had to be born here.

'Is it that they don't know?'

"Your name?" Damien asked.

It definitely wasn't the most courteous way to ask, but hey, he was still working on it.

"Ah, right! I forgot to introduce myself!"

The man didn't seem to mind. He knocked his head and held his arm out for a handshake.

"Nice to meet you! I'm Darius Silver!"

Damien smiled.

'Same name, huh?'

He hadn't seen his younger brother in a while. Dominic returned to the palace while Damien was still there, but Darius was too busy. It seemed that he had become some sort of hero in the past ten years.

'I'll have to go meet him when I get back.'

Putting that aside, Damien shook the man's hand and introduced himself as well.

"Damien. As you said, I am not from Terra. However, your guesses are not correct either."

Darius' eyes widened.

"None of them? Then are you rural?"

"Not that either."

"Then...an outsider?! S-sir, I apologize for being rude!"

The man's whole attitude changed when he finally discerned it.

Damien smirked a little at the comedic change of tone.

'Makes sense. Most of the people who come here are old bastards who have been fighting each other for eons. They're more war-crazed than the kids here who see this island's challenge as nothing more than a competition.'

Darius was fumbling with his words, trying to show a respectful attitude to a person he knew could kill him without thinking twice.

The outsiders on the island, especially the ones who arrived more recently, were incredibly dangerous people.

Every family from those who tried to keep their kids away from the challenge to those who pushed them towards it gave the same warning.

Stay away from outside experts until they become insiders.

"...one again, I truly apologize for—"

"Darius, how old are you?"

"Me?" The man stopped and pointed to himself.

He scratched his head in embarrassment."

"Compared to you, sir, I'm probably just a child. I turned 115 a few months ago."

Damien couldn't stop his brow from twitching.

He expected the kid to be older than he looked. No matter what their constitutions were, the children in this realm still needed a considerable amount of time to practice Nonexistence to a level that matched even the weakest challengers on the island.

Still, what was this treatment from someone who wasn't even that much younger than him?!

"Hey Darius, how old do you think I am?"

It was something he logically should've skirted past, but something in his heart couldn't stand it.

He was not that old! No matter how he acted, he couldn't look that old to other people, right?

"Hmm..." Darius scanned him up and down. Since Damien asked the question forwardly, he didn't seem to have any hesitation about answering.

"Before I knew you were an outsider, I thought you might have been a few thousand years old? Now that I know the truth, though, I think you have to be at least five million, right?"

"Keugh..."

Damien frowned.

'What an insane number.'

Even he didn't know how old he was at this point, but he figured he'd just choose an age and stick to it whenever the question came up in the future.

"150. I'm only around 150 this year."

"Ehhh?!"

Darius' eyes widened once again, this time into saucers.

"Really?! Then it's fine to talk to you casually, right? I was scared since you act like one of those old guys, but I guess we're around the same age, huh!"

Damien gritted his teeth as he got the urge to cough up blood.

Darius' presence was doing nothing but hurting his pride.

He wanted to respond and say something, but he didn't get the chance as his conversation was so rudely interrupted by the buzzing of the ticket he picked up from the reception desk.

Damien was teleported out of the lobby with that being the last thing that he heard.

He definitely planned to go back and finish that conversation later. More than to make friends, it was because he wanted to see the perspective of this realm's denizens through Darius.

But first...

...he had a lot of anger to take out on the trial ahead.

## Chapter 1805 Earth Temple [2]

"Welcome. You must be participant Damien Void."

A middle-aged man approached with a smile on his face. People at his age were rare to see, as most people achieved prominence when they were either very old or very young.

He was the only other person Damien could see in the pure white hall that he was transported to. As he glanced around, he noticed that the walls, floor, and even ceiling were padded with a strange material that seemed to be scanning his Nonexistence.

More importantly, there was a piece of hidden glass on a certain part of the wall. There was likely an observer's platform there. Whether it was empty or not was still a question.

"Nice to meet you too," Damien responded, returning his attention to the man.

He only looked away for a brief second, but by the time he returned his gaze to the man he was already standing in front of him.

"We will go over the trial requirements in case you are not aware. There is no such thing as a ranking system for new members, so this trial is mainly to determine if you are ready to join the combat challenge. However, if you show a memorable performance, there are benefits you can attain," the man said while looking down at his clipboard.

"Benefits?" Damien repeated.

"Indeed. From better accommodations to privileges to use specific training facilities reserved for higher tier members to even an audience with our esteemed leader. Depending on your level of skill, you could gain many advantages in our temple."

As the man listed the many things he could earn, Damien nodded.



'So, if I want to live a convenient life, I should put in a little effort. Works for me.'

"What's the trial?"

"Ah, that is even simpler," the man said.

"All you need to do is kill the beasts that will be summoned into this hall. They will become increasingly stronger as you defeat them. If you make it past five levels, you will be accepted into the temple. Anything after that is for extra rewards."

It was indeed as streamlined as possible. Since the test only existed to make sure that nobody recklessly entered the folds of battle, the challenge itself was also easy at the early levels.

After telling Damien everything he needed to know, the man went off to the side and teleported away, likely to the observer's booth.

At the same time, a beast appeared for Damien to kill.

It was small in size and had canine features. It was clearly meant to test new people who had never been in battle before.

'Did they also think I was one of the kids raised here? Well, at least that makes me feel a little better.'

Damien cracked his knuckles and smiled.

'It's too late to increase the difficulty. I might as well just enjoy it.'

It wasn't as if it would take him a long time to get to the harder beasts anyway.

Damien flicked his hand out. For a beast of this level, it wasn't even worth setting up a domain.

With that single flick of his wrist, the beast vanished. It turned into nothingness just as fast as it arrived.

The next several beasts met the same fate.

A lot of them had similar shapes to beasts that existed in the True Void Universe, but none of them were exactly the same. There was always something inherently different about them as their genetic sequences completely differed from beasts that were raised by the laws of Damien's home cosmos.

He didn't take that much time to consider them. The beasts that differed were normal. What made Damien more curious were beings that remained relatively unchanged across all realities.

Humans were like that, weren't they? There wasn't another species that propagated the many cosmos in the way that they did.

Was there?

Damien went through over ten beasts without any trouble. From the eleventh onward, he had to put in a little more effort, but it still wasn't that big of a deal.

Over and over again, Damien cleared out the enemies placed in front of him, thinking only that they were no match for Kura or the beasts from Death's Hold.

Twenty, thirty, forty...

Damien moved so alarmingly fast that he reached forty kills before the news of his trial could be transmitted to the higher authorities.

Nevertheless, that was something that had to happen. It wasn't normal for anyone to come in and make it this far.

After all, even people who came from the second island had to adapt to serious combat. Only after reaching this island did people become skilled at using Nonexistence. Beforehand, even the experts like the people who tried to chase after Damien were just fodder.

He saw it himself when they fought against Death's Hold. Someone like Kura could absolutely draw the beasts of that land into a prolonged fight. She wouldn't have been instantly killed regardless of their power.

The Temple Master was not going to appear for a matter like this, but the news made it to his closest aides.

Originally, there were only three people in the observer's booth. By the time Damien reached his fiftieth beast, that number increased to ten.

"Who is he?"

A man with dark black hair and a thick goatee stood facing the hidden glass and spoke to the man who originally explained the rules to Damien.

"His name is Damien Void, sir. At first, we believed that he was related to some family from the island, however, his performance suggests that he is an outsider."

"That much is obvious," the black-haired man said.

The attendant shook.

"I apologize, sir. He has not been on the island for long, and it seems like he has only fought one time. We cannot ascertain anything more."

"Oh? He got into a fight? Was it one of those who keep watch over the shoreline?"

"Yes, sir. It was Kura from the Water Temple."

"And the result?"

"His victory."

"Oh?"

The black-haired man raised an eyebrow in interest. Kura's name was well known. She was a very difficult person to deal with unless one had a power that perfectly antithesized hers. Most people avoided her, and the experts who ended up fighting her on the shore always found themselves humbled before they approached the temples.

Not to mention, she did not attain her gold badge because of luck.

He defeated her?

His first fight on the island was a victory against someone of her caliber?

"Interesting."

The man smiled slightly.

'Competition has become less fierce recently. The current Area Lords are too strong, so most newcomers are unmotivated and choose to stop before facing them. If someone like this arrives to throw a stone into the stagnant water...'

...wouldn't the island once again regain its fervor?

'I need to meet him after his trial ends.'

As the black-haired man gained an interest in Damien, the man himself was focusing on the final enemy that appeared before him.

He found the answer to his previous question when it was summoned.

The only other species that was able to exist in every cosmos the same way that humans did...

Dragons.

Chapter 1806 Earth Temple [3]

It was a bit different. Humans somehow managed to accomplish an impossible feat through their existence.

They were not the strongest, nor were they the fastest. They didn't have the highest potential for survival, and they didn't reproduce as fast as some other species.

When viewed objectively from the perspective of someone who believed they were above humanity, the race didn't have anything to offer.

However, that was only from a jaded and arrogant perspective.

It was exactly because humans weren't the best at anything that they were forced to innovate and find ways to survive.

Humanity had an unbelievable instinct to adapt and problem-solve. Even when dragons and other races threatened to wipe humanity out of existence, the human race always became the dominant race of any realm.

Grand Heavens Boundary was split into nine sectors. Those nine sectors had dominant races of their own and other races only appeared in smaller numbers.

However, the Human Domain was always most feared.

They produced the most heroes, and time and time again, they were the ones to solve the universe's crises.

Humanity was a threat that couldn't be explained. It was as if the Void itself was supporting them and allowing them to prosper, but in reality, they did so through nothing but their own efforts and ambitions.

Dragons, on the other hand, were common because of their Myth.

The mythology of the dragon race was just too far-reaching. Every culture had its own form of dragonkind that was either worshipped or treated as an absolute evil.

These dragons propagated all societies across all cosmos whether the race existed in those places or not.

And because of how prominent their Myth became, spanning the infinite realities, they were forcefully implanted into each and every existing cosmos.

They did so not by their own strength, but through the beliefs of others.

It was a bit strange as such a case was rarely seen. Even when Myths became large enough, those species who they pertained to were never able to spread through the entire Void.

For instance, Phoenixes were just as popular as dragons and spanned almost as many cosmos.

However, even as close as the Sacred Abyss, one could see an example of a cosmos with dragons and no phoenixes.

The dragon summoned for Damien to fight was from a distant cosmos that he had no knowledge of, but dragons were especially easy for him to defeat.

After all, they were the same no matter where they came from.

And, if it came to tiers of dragonkind, Damien was at the very top.

His blood which once was enough to call him a dragon still had the effects of those days.

He never lost his draconic breath. And, the suppression he released onto lower draconic beings never faded.

It came from his body and blood directly, so even this realm could not suppress it or remove it from existence.

It wasn't even a fight.

In an evenly matched scenario, Damien might've had serious trouble with this enemy. It was meant to only be attempted by people who were worthy of being gold badge holders. Damien was able to defeat Kura, but what about a gold badge holder who played offensively?

He wouldn't be able to use the same strategies, which meant that the likelihood of failure was far higher.

Unfortunately for those who prayed for his misfortune, Damien didn't plan on dying in this realm.

Anything that ruined the perfect Nonexistence he'd been creating was forbidden, including death and the loss of anything he'd achieved.

The second he saw that dragon, he released his aura and suppressed it.

The dragon kneeled before him, refusing to stand up.

As he stared into its eyes and it felt his killing intent, it was overcome by fear.

The form of a gargantuan beast of black scales was seared into its mind.

And, as if to appease him, it raised its claw and dug out its own heart.

That was a scene that Damien's observers could not forget. "Amazing!"

The black-haired man appeared on the floor right after the dragon killed itself.

"I have never seen such a performance! Brother, are you perhaps a dragon?" Damien shrugged, acknowledging the powerful impression the man gave.

"Not necessarily, but it's wrong to say I don't have any connections to their race."

"Hahaha! Even better!"

The man seemed particularly excited about Damien.

In a peaceful situation, was there a need to be so overjoyed at a powerful challenger?

The answer to that question wasn't nearby. For now, all Damien could do was follow the black-haired man who took him out of the trial room and into an elevator that moved them to a higher-floor meeting room.

"I know it's a bit late, but allow me to introduce myself. I am Karlen Teres. I serve the Temple Master as his Right Hand."

Damien raised his brows in slight surprise. The Earth Temple's master had a Right and Left Hand that controlled a majority of the organization's operations. They were the most important people in the temple aside from the man who ruled it, so it was a surprise to see one of them in front of him the moment he arrived.



"For what reason has someone as esteemed as the Earth Temple's Right Hand come to see me?" Damien asked probingly.

"In a land like this one, can there be any other reason?" Karlen said with a smile.

"I am curious about you, and, of course, there is something I wish to ask of you." "You move fast."

"I like to get to the point when I'm talking to smart people."

Karlen leaned forward with his elbows on his knees and wrapped his fingers together in front of his face.

"Clearing the fiftieth level of the trial may not mean anything to you as you are new here, but that kind of power has never been showcased by a newcomer on this island. Your existence is far more significant than you think."

Naturally, even in a place like this, defeating a dragon was quite a feat.

No, when it was a place like this, it was even more significant than if the same achievement was made anywhere else. That dragon was specifically created to stop newcomers and show them that their power could not compare to the true powerhouses of the island.

That was why there was such a drastic difference between the 49th and 50th monsters.

Not that Damien felt it, since he took the dragon down without any effort.

"You must be aware that you have done more than enough to join our temple. You have also taken every possible reward that we give through the administration trial, so there likely isn't much else that you would want. However, I still want to make you this offer," Karlen continued.

"And that offer is...?"

"Participate in the Grand Competition that is coming soon."

'So it was a tournament arc.'

That was enough for Damien to immediately refuse. He was too old to be doing tournament arcs, for crying out loud!

Nevertheless, before he could speak out, Karlen cut him off.

"There is a grand tournament that will be held between the three temples soon. If you are able to perform well, not only will you bolster our temple's reputation, but you will also be able to rapidly progress through the ranks and challenge an Area Lord."

'That's true.' Damien thought to himself.

If there was one good thing about a tournament, it was that the revolving door of opponents would help him complete this island's challenge at a much faster pace than anything else.

If there was one good thing about a tournament, it was that the revolving door of opponents would help him complete this island's challenge at a much faster pace than anything else.

"If you can take the top spot in the competition, I am willing to reward you with anything in my power."

Karlen's tone was no joke.

But, listening to his earnest request, Damien's mind returned to the same question he had been asking himself previously.

On an island where peace was the main theme, was such desperation necessary?

There must have been a hidden story somewhere. And, though he really just wanted to progress through things as fast as possible...

'...I have a sinking feeling that I'm going to get involved in some really annoying stuff.'

#### Chapter 1807 Earth Temple [4]

Damien was too great of a card from the start. If he didn't express full disclosure on their first meeting, he didn't think it would be possible to get the other side's help.

"As you have likely seen, our island functions on a system of peace. In order for the greatest number of practitioners to achieve success and to keep our common population safe, we treat the island's trial as a challenge rather than a death game," he said.

"However, as you also know, there are far easier ways to grow. Especially when making use of the Emptiness, the fastest method is always murder."

It was a story as old as time.

A society achieved peace, but there were always people who didn't desire peace. Through a million years of stability, the ire of those people rose and rose until they decided to revolt against the established system and plunge the world back into chaos.

These people were discontent. The increasing levels of the Area Lords made them feel like they had no choice but to be trapped on the island if it maintained its current status quo, so they wanted to tear it down.

If the world was once again enveloped in chaos and they were allowed to kill wantonly, they could rapidly increase their skills without needing to work hard and train.

The common people were off-limits. If any of them were killed, the killer was always immediately found and captured. There wasn't such a thing as getting away with murder on the island.

"As such, those people with high ambitions who are not willing to put in the effort to reach their goals have banded together."

They formed an organization to oppose the three temples, hiding in the shadows and growing steadily over time.

"As we do not die, it is impossible to completely exterminate them. The best we have been able to do until now is gather the ones we find in a prison below the earth, a place from where they will never again see the light."

However, that was until now.

"The tournament in question was originally meant to be a front to both draw them out and make them assume that we are too focused on ourselves to care about them. However, as more of them revealed themselves for the sake of the reward, we realized that their numbers are far higher than we originally expected."

Essentially, the tournament was a trap. The verified members of the temples had been informed that they were not allowed to participate. Some others mixed in with the culprits, of course, but a majority of the tournament's participants were enemies of the third island's society.

The problem arose there.

It was originally planned for the best of the three temples to participate in the tournament as well. Every time they killed an opponent, the tournament arena's formations would revive them inside of a prison.

From there, they would be interrogated and only released if they were found innocent. The rest would all be forced to remain there for eternity.

While the tournament was ongoing, the remaining forces of the three temples would lay siege on the members of the enemy organization and bring the rest of them into custody as well.

The plan was honestly close to complete. Despite the unexpected numbers and other factors, the three temples were more than prepared to take down their enemy. This wasn't the first time such a situation arose on the island, and it wouldn't be the last.

However, the Earth Temple specifically ended up in a predicament.

"Our original participant, Rosalyn, is currently incapacitated after challenging an Area Lord. As she is an impulsive person, it was impossible to stop her in time to tell her about the plan."

"So, basically, you need me to fill in that spot and clean up the idiots who entered the tournament," Damien said.

"Precisely."

Karlen nodded as if pleased with Damien's quick understanding.

As mentioned, the plan was practically complete. Damien's help was only needed so that the single crack within was filled.

The matter of clearing out the members of the organization on the island would be handled by the temples. As would everything else.

As long as he filled that spot and properly showed off, defeating his enemies and sending them to the prison, his job was over.

'I don't have a reason to refuse.'

Damien originally believed that he would have to do a ton of work. That was how these things usually went, right?

It was different for a society with a timeless history.

The third island was built on billions of years of struggle. By this point, their strategy for cleaning up rebels was established in a training manual. They really just had to follow the steps and their problems would be solved.

'The more concerning thing is that prison they mentioned.'

It was a ticking time bomb. If they hadn't found a reliable method to kill off their denouncers, then didn't that mean billions of years' worth of criminals were sitting together in that dark place?

Perhaps it wouldn't happen in the next few million years, but at some point, they would find a way to escape.

At the end of the day, they were using Nonexistence too. They only needed one person to become stronger than the person who made the prison to make their big break.

'Hmm...'

That was an entirely unrelated problem, but Damien still didn't like it.

Considering that there were children on this island who thought of it as their home, he couldn't just be content with letting chaos establish its roots.

This was not just a place of trial like the other islands. It was a true nation.

'I can worry about that later. For now...'

Karlen was eagerly awaiting his answer with eyes that didn't fit a middle-aged man in the slightest.

"I'll do it," he said.

"But you said there would be rewards, right?"

Karlen smiled widely.

"Yes. If you are unable to win the tournament, then we will give you the tournament reward as thanks for your help. If you do win, then we will provide something of equal value alongside it."

There wasn't an established sense of trust between them. To fill that void and make both of them comfortable with working together, it was best to establish a relationship of mutual benefits first.

Damien didn't care about the rewards. Unless it was formed by Nonexistence itself, he wasn't interested in this land's treasures.

Still, he was curious.

The lesser reward was already something that forced so many members of that hidden group into the light.

To say that he would provide something of equal value as well... What kind of cards were Karlen holding onto?

The information itself was inconsequential.

Damien was helping them out of goodwill, though he would never say that to them.

Plus, the tournament was the best way for him to escape the island rapidly.

When they gave him such favorable conditions for a not-so-difficult task, how was he meant to be caught up on rewards? He wasn't that selfish.

Nevertheless, after getting Damien's approval, Karlen stood up and guided him to the door.

"We can talk more extensively about our plans when the festival draws nearer. For now, allow me to show you around our wondrous temple."

#### Chapter 1808 Earth Temple [5]

Damien somewhat expected it after seeing the man's attitude, but Karlen himself was the one who gave the tour.

The Temple's Right Hand was an extremely notorious figure. There wasn't a person on this island who didn't know his face.

So, seeing him act as a tour guide for a mysterious man was definitely a strange experience for the people of the Earth Temple. They went from top to bottom. Most floors were used only for housing, so the tour didn't take very long. There were many facilities on the higher floors that would be helpful to any practitioner who wanted to train, but they were nothing different from the norm.

Nevertheless, the tour did a good job raising Damien's fame. In the coming days before the tournament began, he'd likely have to do a lot more to secure himself the spot he was promised.

After all, no matter what happened, it was too suspicious for the single real tournament spot to be given to a new member.

Sure, Rosalyn was out of commission, but there were several people who could take her place.

Was the Right Hand saying that this man was better than them by parading him around and then succinctly announcing that he was going to represent the temple?

By the time that happened, Damien was already in his room so he didn't need to worry about it.

But, he was able to secure some useful information beforehand.

It happened right around when the tour ended...



"Ah, it's you!"

An annoying guy approached Damien without reservation. It seemed his age reveal was enough to remove any kind of fear Darius had. When he saw Damien again, he instantly ran up and started talking about the rumors going around the temple.

"Did you hear? Some crazy guy just received some crazy honors from the higher-ups. He has the same name as you too! What was it again...? Damien Void? His name sounds cool, but why haven't I ever seen him before?"

'I change my mind. Maybe I like this guy.'

That sentence made Damien cry invisible tears in his mind.

For the first time in his life...

This was something that had never happened before.

For years and years and years he'd held onto the trauma it caused him, but for the first time ever, he felt like he received a little bit of healing.

'Finally, someone who thinks it's cool.'

Damien was now in a world where everyone was weird!

He didn't have to cringe about his last name anymore!

Seriously, in the Heavenly World, people didn't laugh because they feared Void Palace, but he could see it in their hearts!

Even in that fantasy world so far removed from Earth, Void was still a cringe last name!

Hell, even Earth wasn't the original Earth, so how cringe would it have been on that planet?!

'We're getting off-topic.'

Whatever the case, Damien's opinion of Darius rose just slightly in that moment. He spent most of the rest of the time in his own thoughts, but he did process Darius' yapping at a later time to see if he said anything useful.

That guy seemed to have developed some kind of interest in Damien.

It wasn't for nothing. Damien was the only outsider who came to the island at a young age, and though Darius was a bit on the dumber side to not notice that Damien was the very person he gossiped about, he had a subconscious understanding that the man was powerful.

His instincts told him to get closer to that man, so he followed them. That was the kind of person he was.

It made Damien smile. He was also like that in his younger years.

His mind was a bit different considering what he'd been through. The eons of memories he held didn't help him maintain a young mentality either.

For an average practitioner, especially one from the Land of Nothingness, Darius' age was the same as a newly eighteen-year-old individual from Earth who was just taking their first steps into society.

It was hard for Damien to relate to the highly energetic young man, but he remained courteous and friendly. In the end, Darius wasn't a bad person.

No, he was actually a lot like Damien's own Darius when he was around the same age.

Nevertheless, their conversation at that time ended rapidly. Damien was the center of attention, after all. He was receiving all kinds of gazes from every side that Darius seemed blissfully unaware of.

Still, Damien was able to learn the names of his actual competition through the man.

'So from the Fire Temple, it's a guy called Quill. From the Water Temple, a woman named Yanui.'

Damien wasn't necessarily worried about them, but it would do him no harm to understand his opponents before entering the competition.

Most importantly, the Area Lord who would stand as the final contender of the tournament was already chosen.

That was where Damien directed his attention.

'He's called the Dragon Lord, which makes me feel like I'll have an advantage, but that would be pretty stupid.'

He couldn't be lucky enough to face a dragon, right? It would just be sad if everything ended with an unfair fight.

'Though, that might be the reason why Karlen was so insistent.'

If he expected Damien to defeat the Dragon Lord as well, then it made sense. Say an Area Lord who got tired of his seat wanted to start an era of chaos so he could finally be defeated and freed.

It was entirely a possibility, but if the person who controlled everything was the Dragon Lord, then the tournament wouldn't have been able to exist in the first place.

'But if that's the case, then the Dragon Lord also has to be related to that organization somehow.'

That was even more plausible in a certain sense. For such a society to gain relevance, it needed to have a strong backer.

Say an Area Lord who got tired of his seat wanted to start an era of chaos so he could finally be defeated and freed.

It was entirely a possibility, but if the person who controlled everything was the Dragon Lord, then the tournament wouldn't have been able to exist in the first place.

How could he possibly miss the signs when the entire tournament was filled only with his people?

If he thought it was because of their efforts rather than the temples' schemes, then he was an idiot who didn't deserve to say he had lived for millions of years.

'Schemes, schemes and more schemes.'

It always turned out like that, didn't it?

The most peaceful-looking societies were the ones with rotten roots that always had something going on behind the scenes.

'I like that this is a place where civilians can exist in peace.'

A world where everyone was constantly fighting at all times was tiring. Damien was happy to see that a place like this existed in the Land of Nothingness.

If for nobody else, then for the people he met on his trip to Terra, and the people who led him around the city when he arrived.

"Haa..."

He sighed to himself.

'I'm doing troublesome things.'

He wanted to preserve the sanctity he had felt from this place.

That meant, in the end, he would end up contributing heavily to this war, right?

'No.'

That wasn't Damien's style.

'If I'm going to invest effort into this...'

Just like he always did... "...then I might as well just do everything myself."

#### Chapter 1809 Earth Temple [6]

According to Karlen's short explanation, the tournament would take place a month later. Damien's appearance was extremely convenient. If it weren't for his timely arrival, the Earth Temple would have been in a predicament that would take until the very last week before the event to solve.

Since Damien was now in the temple and declared the representative, the most glaring issue was solved. The highest authorities of the temple could return to their more important planning.

Karlen left Damien with a message saying that the Temple Master would be calling him soon. Not knowing how soon "soon" was, Damien was forced to stay inside the temple for a period of time.

He originally wanted to spend this time trying to understand the situation of this island in more detail.

Unfortunately, banishing ignorance didn't help him. He could not absolutely understand the happenings of this island. At first, he assumed it was because his power wasn't enough, but that was not the case.

Rather, this island had a suppressant mechanism on the ability.

More than likely, it was to ensure fair competition. If people could banish ignorance and learn their enemies' weak points beforehand, they would never truly struggle in a fight. All battles would turn into a matter of whose weakness could be attacked faster.

Learning the enemy's movements and tendencies was an incredibly important part of Nonexistence combat. The island must have been equipped with such a mechanism so that it was never made otherwise.

Still, it was just inconvenient for Damien. He would have to get creative in searching for clues on his own. His original plan was to have Darius show him around the city and use it as an excuse to do some investigating, but that obviously fell apart.

Since he was confined for this period of time by his obligation to meet the master of this temple, he figured he would at least be productive by showing off and consolidating his position in the eyes of the other members.

That was how Damien's week-long combat circuit cum training lesson began. At first, it was just the expected scenario.

All of the people in line to take Rosalyn's place when she was taken out of the equation came to challenge him for his spot.

He didn't really care about their demands, but he said that he was going to be friendly and learn to socialize again, so he accepted anyway.

How did it go again?

Right, Damien fought five of them and was quickly disappointed by their skill level.

To be fair, they were new gold badge holders. Karlen didn't just take Damien over his existing options for no reason.

He quite literally didn't have existing options.

Other than Rosalyn, all of the other gold badge holders were either vital to other parts of the plan or too weak to play the main character in their charade.

Karlen was already resorting to looking for outside powers who could help him, such as some mercenaries and wanderers who got special permission from the temples to participate in the island's trial.

Damien falling from the sky was his lucky charm. The rewards he promised were generous, but they weren't anywhere near the amount that had to be forked over to hire outsiders for a publicized event like this.

Damien felt a little bit of pity for the man. And, seeing these kids acting so pompous with just a little bit of power rubbed him the wrong way.

He didn't care if they wanted to be arrogant, but they at least needed the skills to back themselves up, right?

So, as they were on the same side for now, Damien chose to help them gain those skills instead of putting them down.

Despite having spent less time in this realm than them, Damien had an even more pronounced connection with Nonexistence.

They were born with constitutions that allowed them to exist in a realm of nothingness, which gave them a huge advantage over others.

However, Damien had been bathed in the concept itself. He died and became one with it before returning to the world, and when he arrived in the Land of Nothingness, he became the first person to fulfill the concept's wish.

As if that wasn't enough, his Void Physique could never be forgotten.

The Void was a force above both Existence and Nonexistence, so how could it be suppressed in a realm where nothing existed?

It regulated Damien's power, purified it, and turned every ten steps he took into a hundred.

Damien had already taken thousands of steps on his own, so what did that equate to with the Void Physique's support?

It wasn't just luck that allowed Damien to do the things he did. It was practice, dedication, and inborn talent that made him equal to a gold badge holder from the moment he stepped on the third island.

He only meant to give him some tips, but his "tips" were filled with information they'd never even begun to consider.

That was the problem with being too engrossed in a single realm. Eventually, that realm's thought process would override everything else. From the challengers who had been on this island for a long time to those who were new, from commoners to the leaders of the temples, everyone had been in the Land of Nothingness for far too long.

They forgot how to consider opinions outside of this realm's norm. They forgot how to act like the Supreme Beings they once were.

Damien had barely been in this realm for some years now. It wasn't nearly enough to be called a long period of time. At his core, he was not an inhabitant of the Land of Nothingness like these people.

He was able to innovate and adapt, so his take on Nonexistence differed heavily from the norm that was followed by everyone else.



When those five geniuses heard his advice, they wanted to ignore it as the ramblings of an old man, but how were they supposed to do that? He defeated them with what was said in those exact ramblings!

Putting away their shame and accepting that he was better than them, the group of five challenged him again while keeping his advice.

The improvement they saw in the short term was not amazing, but they could feel how valuable the small changes they made would be as they continued training. News spread fast.

Those five geniuses never left him alone, so the rest of the temple did the same. Suddenly, Damien became a teacher who had a revolving door of students approaching him for extra lessons.

He didn't really want to be in such a tiring position, but he was forced to accept the consequences of his actions.

For the next week, he taught and taught and taught. He was practically sleeping in the temple's training center since he knew he would have to return there in the morning anyway.

It was exhausting, but Damien knew since a long time ago that he was actually someone who loved teaching. He became famous in the Earth Temple with just a week's effort, and not a single person was left doubting his capabilities.

Still, just when Damien thought he'd finally have the chance to take a step outside the temple, he found himself faced with another matter.

His meeting with the Temple Master, of course, but also something much, much more annoying.

## Chapter 1810 Conspiracy [1]

Being called to see the Temple Master was an incredible boon for Damien. He was having fun teaching the kids, but he needed some time to practice for himself too.

Not to mention, if he couldn't leave the temple, he also couldn't figure out what the island's real situation was. The longer he stayed inside, the more he felt like the conspiracy the temples were dealing with wasn't as simple as they made it seem.

Damien was hoping that the Temple Master was going to give him some answers, so as he was led to the temple atop the column, his feelings towards the meeting changed.

At least he wasn't going to look bored in front of that person anymore.

The temple itself was impressive, but it wasn't as decorated as one would expect. Since it was never meant to house outsiders, its decor was relatively minimalistic.

An attendant brought him in front of a door and left him to do the rest. He walked into the room and sat on one of the couches around the large coffee table in its center.

He didn't have to wait long for the other person to arrive.

"You must be Damien. Karlen has been singing your praises for many days now. I apologize as I was too busy to meet with you before now."

A large lion-like man was the one who greeted him. His hair was like a brown mane and his body was extremely muscular. It was to the point where he looked strange wearing a suit and acting like a high official when he looked more like a beast.

Nevertheless, Damien didn't have to guess his identity. He stood up and held his hand out in greeting.

"It's nice to finally meet you, Temple Master."

"Hm."

The Temple Master received his handshake and led him back to the same couches. They sat around a table, and with a wave of his hand, the Temple Master produced a teapot and two cups for them.

The man's aesthetic was strange, but his power was no joke. The aura he possessed was spectacular to the point where even Damien wasn't sure if he could win in a head-on battle.

"Do you know why I've called for you today?" The Temple Master asked, starting their conversation.

"I don't," Damien responded, "but it's likely related to the plan for the coming weeks, is it not?"

The Temple Master nodded his head.

"You are correct. However, rather than to speak about the plan itself, I have come to give you information and make a request. I am sure you already understand the gist of how the tournament is structured. At the end, the person who surpasses the rest will fight against an Area Lord for the crowd to witness. The Lord in question is the Dragon Lord."

'Ah, so it was about that.'

Damien already knew about this. Karlen sugarcoated it by saying that he would be rewarded as long as he won the tournament, but this stage was technically his entire combat circuit.

They wanted him to win and win and win until his badge turned platinum. When that happened, he could challenge and kill the Area Lord for spectacle.

It was strange mainly because the purpose of this tournament was to destroy the enemy organization whose name Damien still was not informed of. The Dragon Lord had to be involved with that organization, but if that was truly the case, then his presence was absolutely unexplainable.

The Temple Master must have realized that Damien would start questioning things, so he called him here to clarify matters in person.

"Actually..." The Temple Master started.

"The Dragon Lord is one of our own."

"Hm?"

Damien made a sound of surprise at the unexpected revelation. "We found long ago that he was the backer behind the Chaos Faction. Since then, we have been at war with him and treating him as an enemy. Only recently did we learn that it is all a farce. In reality, the true backer of the Chaos Faction has been controlling him through a skill that he cannot undo."

'An unexpected turn of events!'

Damien was definitely not expecting this kind of twist. If it was like that, then it definitely made some more sense.

"Does he maintain his own ego?" he asked to confirm.

"Yes. His ego is still able to perceive the world despite his body and mind being controlled. In order to save him, we used a loophole so he could accept our contract and enter the tournament," the Temple Master replied.

"The only way to get rid of his curse is to kill him and let him revive. I have come to you to ask if you are confident that you can do it."

The Temple Master's eyes were filled with sincere emotion.

'So there was something like that.'

It was certainly possible. If he died and his existence was returned from nothingness by the realm, then anything affecting his previous existence would be removed.

However, the Temple Master's information revealed that the true mastermind was still unknown, right?

Didn't that make the eradication plan a lot more difficult to accomplish?

'Or is it that he doesn't want to share it with me?'

Whatever the case, Damien still planned to carry out his own investigation, so he could figure it out later.

For now, it was clear that the Temple Master just wanted to affirm that Damien himself was someone worth trusting with as important of a task as saving the Dragon Lord.

Damien smiled.

"My goal on this island was always to kill an Area Lord. If I can do that while also helping you guys out, then for what reason would I not?"

He met the Temple Master's eyes with his own powerful determination.

"You don't need to worry about the tournament anymore now that I'm here. Just focus on doing everything else properly."

The Temple Master looked at him for a moment before his lips widened into a large grin.

"Good. I look forward to working with you, Damien Void."

"I should be the one saying that to you."

It was a short meeting where both people got to the point fast and reached a conclusion without any fuss.

Damien and the Temple Master were both focused on other things, so they only did as much as they needed to when they met.

The problem was that when Damien left that meeting, he was already faced with something else.

Karlen appeared before he could even get to his room and prepare to leave the temple.

"Ah, Damien, there you are!"

He walked up with a friendly smile and a wave.

"Do you have some time right now? The representatives from the other temples are holding a meeting soon. I believe it will be in your best interest to meet them."

Damien sighed inwardly.

Did he have time?

No.

But, since he was working right now, he had an obligation to do work-related tasks no matter how annoying they were.

Plus, it was just a meeting, right?

He would be done with it in a few hours at most and then he could go forward with his plans.

With a stale look on his face, he begrudgingly accepted Karlen's proposal.

"Fine. Where are they?"