

Void 221

Chapter 221 - Next Stop [3]

Not long after the White Dragon King left, a seemingly human woman walked up to Damien and Ruyue. The only feature defining her as nonhuman was the pair of dragon horns jutting out of her forehead.

“Hi! My name is Elisa and I’ll be your guide today.”

‘Elisa?’

It was the first non-Chinese name Damien had heard since he came to this world. Even the White Dragon King told him to address him as Senior Bai. But, he wasn’t as surprised as he expected.

The words of the Burning Sun Sect Elder popped up in his head. About how there was no need for him to take up a pseudonym since there were still people with non-Chinese names in the Cloud Plane.

It was just that the rarity of them far exceeded his expectations. Whether it was the Northern Continent or the Central Continent, he always felt like he stood out when it came to names.

However, the fact that Ruyue and the rest didn’t really raise an eyebrow at his name should’ve been indication enough that such names still existed.

This was especially so for Elisa. She was, after all, a member of White Dragon Grotto, a person who lived in the 3000 Beast Mountain Range. There was no way they’d be completely closed off

from outside culture since there have been plenty who became stranded in the mountain range before, but that didn't mean they'd adhere to it.

Up until this point, the only names he had learned since arriving were Senior Bai and Elisa herself.

Anyway, while Damien was thinking stupid thoughts, Elisa was giving a brief rundown of the White Dragon Grotto's operation. Luckily, it wasn't anything they hadn't heard from Senior Bai beforehand, so Damien didn't miss much.

Suddenly, Elisa took out a round copper medallion. "We're going to be teleporting now, so be prepared."

It wasn't like she was supposed to know that Damien was a spatial affinity user. Otherwise, there would be no need for a warning.

When the light of spatial fluctuations faded, the three found themselves within...a shack.

"I know what you're thinking, but there's a reason to everything," Elisa said with a smile. "As you already know, the White Dragon Grotto is a place that fully embodies the law of the jungle. The one with the bigger fist rules.

"Our entire philosophy and lifestyle revolve around this concept, so naturally, the living arrangements are the same. Since you two have only just arrived, you are in the smallest Worm level accommodation.

“From the lowest level of Worm, you then have Snake, Wyvern, Dragon, and True Dragon level. The Worm level is usually reserved for those newbies that haven’t gone into battle yet. Rarely anyone actually stays at this level. But complacency isn’t something we allow.

“From the Worm level, one only needs to win a single fight to promote to the Snake level. If you don’t promote within 1 month, you are clearly a coward. Those left behind in the Worm level after a month has passed will be forced to fight, and if they still refuse, they’ll be killed and fed to others without hesitation.”

Damien couldn’t help but raise his brow at this. Although he had already realized it before, this place was truly cruel. There was no concept of strategy or planning here. It was simply fight, fight, and fight some more.

But Damien felt that there couldn’t be a better environment than this one. He had felt it previously, even if he did so unconsciously. The dragon bloodline itself was like a living creature in some ways. It had its own desires and pride. It craved battle.

And this place was filled with that.

Paying no heed to Damien’s thoughts, Elisa continued her explanation. “To promote from Snake level to Wyvern level, one must win 100 battles, and from the Wyvern Level to the Dragon Level is 1000 battles. Naturally, all these wins must be consecutive, because the only outcome if you lose is death.”

“Hm? What about the True Dragon Level?” Damien asked.

Elisa grinned. “I’m glad you asked. The True Dragon Level isn’t the same as the other levels. For those levels, no matter the purity of your bloodline, you can still attain them through battle.

However, to enter the True Dragon Level, your bloodline must reach a level of purity that is accepted by Lord White Dragon himself.”

“What makes the True Dragon Level special is precisely that. Regardless of your strength, you can enter it as long as you attain the desired amount of bloodline purity.”

“But if the accommodations and treatment for the True Dragon Level are the highest of them all, why is it that even the weaklings can achieve it?”

“That’s simple. Those that reach the True Dragon Level are personally trained by Leader Bai. It doesn’t matter what your strength is when you enter the level. By the time you are deployed for the first time, you’re guaranteed to be a peak expert!” A light of worship could be seen in Elisa’s eyes as she spoke.

“The True Dragon Level is the goal of all of us. That’s the reason why we fight constantly to purify our bloodlines. Leader Bai has made the perfect training environment for us, so any failure is our own doing.”

“In fact, even just staying within the White Dragon Grotto is a form of training. The air here is permeated by heavy Dragon Aura, which passively refines our bloodlines with no cost! It’s because we are given such privileges that one must work exceedingly hard to earn their stay.”

Damien listened intently to what Elisa was saying. Her explanation continued for a few hours before she finally handed over the copper medallion and went on her way.

As it turns out, the copper medallion was the only way to enter and exit the residence. A new level of medallion would be given every time one ascended to a new level.

As for the way all of those levels and experts were accommodated, the White Dragon Grotto was actually much bigger than Damien expected.

The arenas that Damien had seen when he first entered were only for those in the Snake level. Each time one ascended, they would move to the lower floors where those on their level would reside.

The system by which the grotto operated was much more complex than Damien originally thought, and the number of experts present was even greater.

First, one would be divided based on their class. Next, they would be further divided by their level.

A 3rd class at the Snake level would never be able to fight a 3rd class at the Wyvern level. At least, under normal circumstances.

When one reached the halfway point of the number of wins they needed to ascend to the next level, they would be granted the opportunity to challenge someone of their same class at a higher level. If they won this challenge, they'd take the other person's spot.

For example, if Damien reached the Snake levels and achieved 50 wins, he'd be able to challenge a 3rd class being at the Wyvern level. If he won, he'd become a Wyvern level combatant and he'd hold the same number of wins as the person he beat.

This way, those whose power exceeded their current level wouldn't have to keep bullying those around them just to ascend.

There were many more mechanics and novelties that Elisa had explained to him, but they were relatively easy to understand and didn't apply to him at the moment, so he didn't really think about them.

Instead, he walked over to the small single bed that took up half of the shack space and laid down. Looking over, he finally remembered something he had forgotten after getting absorbed in the atmosphere of the White Dragon Grotto.

A certain white-haired goddess that was glaring at him with a displeased expression plastered on her face.

Chapter 222 - Next Stop [4]

“Ah...”

“Ah?”

“Ehm...”

“Did your brain become mush earlier?”

“Uhh...”

Damien truly couldn't find any words to say. Since the fight with the tribe leader, he had basically been neglecting Ruyue almost entirely. Thinking back, the last time he spoke to her was to ask her about the current situation. He didn't even think about her side of everything.

And looking at Ruyue's displeased face, he was clear that he wouldn't get off so easily.

And she was indeed pissed. First, he had gone and recklessly challenged a Beast King. After that, he came to this White Dragon Grotto and completely ignored her, treating her like some random girl on the side of the street.

It wasn't necessarily his actions that irked her, rather it was his recklessness and how he kept neglecting her that truly pissed her off.

'Why is it like this?'

She felt that she was being unreasonable. Why did he have to care about her so much? They had come here to train and that was exactly what he had been doing. His recklessness granted him the opportunity to enter such a perfect training ground for him.

Of course he'd be caught up in it. The series of events simply happened too fast. There was no way to not get caught up in such a momentum.

She was well aware that her thoughts were selfish, but she couldn't get herself to stop thinking them. They plagued her mind the entire time they were being carried over to this place, and she had barely been paying attention to that dragon girl's explanation.

She wanted to stop being like this and go along with the flow like he was, but when she recalled the way she had been neglected, an odd sort of rage bubbled up in her chest. And so, she just ended up glaring at him hatefully, waiting for him to speak.

Damien sighed inwardly. He realized just how selfish he was being. They had come here to train, yet he had taken all these opportunities without considering Ruyue.

This White Dragon Grotto was perfect for him, but what about her? She didn't have any dragon bloodline to speak of, so this place wouldn't be of any help to her. Instead, it'd only hinder her training.

But they couldn't separate. They had already met 2 Beast Kings in such a short span of time, and there were still plenty more possibly living on this Endless Snow Mountain. It was too dangerous to traverse alone in this kind of environment.

But he truly didn't know how to appease her. How was he supposed to find a proper training environment for her? By begging Senior Bai? But what could he do?

All these questions kept plaguing him, and when he looked up at Ruyue, his eyes caught her hateful glare.

"Oh shit..." Damien muttered.

"What?" She snapped back.

"I think you just stole my soul."

"Ah..." This time, it was Ruyue's turn to be stunned. Blood furiously rushed to her face as a healthy blush began to creep up.

Even Damien was a bit shocked by his own words. Truthfully, he had spoken without thinking. Because that hateful glare of hers was endlessly attractive.

To be honest, that look of hers made him want to pounce on her immediately, but he hastily suppressed such thoughts.

“You...what kind of things are you saying right now?!”

“Hey, you can’t really blame me for this one. Any sane person would be mesmerized by that damn look. You should instead be praising me for being able to keep my wits about me.” Damien said with a cheeky smile.

“You...!”

Ruyue didn’t know what to say. Sure, he had been shameless before, but it had never reached this extent. It was to the point where it made her speechless.

An ambiguous atmosphere surrounded the blushing Ruyue and cheekily smiling Damien for a bit, almost making her forget her displeasure.

But it didn’t last long. The scenes of Damien following that dragon girl while completely ignoring her presence suddenly appeared in her mind, causing her rage to once again peak.

“Hmph!” She turned her head away, refusing to acknowledge his presence.

‘Eh? Wasn’t she happy just now? What changed?’

Damien, who was still believing that Ruyue’s displeasure originated from him neglecting her training, was utterly confused by her behavior.

But noticing that his teasing had been a temporary solution to the problem, he suddenly remembered something.

“Ah!” He suddenly exclaimed, causing Ruyue to inadvertently turn her attention back to him.

“You know, I bought a few things back at the auction, but I had totally forgotten about them until just now. After all, our circumstances didn’t really allow us to rest.”

“And why should I care what you bought from the auction?” Ruyue quipped back

But Damien simply smiled. ‘This will definitely do the trick.’ He thought inwardly.

“Don’t worry about it and close your eyes for a bit.” He said.

“Close my eyes? What do you want to do?” Ruyue asked with a slightly wary look.

“Eh? What kind of person do you think I am?” Damien asked aggrievedly.

“That’s an easy question to answer. A dumb musclehead who thinks with his fists and forgets to pay attention to those around him.”

Damien clutched his heart as if he was feeling pain. “Aiyo, you really had to hit where it hurts, didn’t you?”

After joking around for a bit, Ruyue finally did as he asked and closed her eyes. Inadvertently, her heartbeat began to accelerate.

She had been right next to him during the auction, so she knew which items he had bought. And while she had a suspicion even back then, she never dared to think too much about it. She didn’t want to be disappointed.

Damien reached out his hand, causing it to sink into the space in front of him, before pulling something out.

It was a beautiful crystalline bracelet. The band and stones on it were all almost translucent, but they had an odd glow whenever they were struck by light. The feeling the bracelet gave off was ethereal and elusive, making its status as a treasure evident.

Damien walked over to Ruyue and gently grabbed her hand. Her whole body jerked at his touch, but in the end, she managed to keep her eyes closed.

And then, he slowly slid the bracelet onto her wrist.

When he was done, he stepped back as if admiring his work. The bracelet itself was relatively lowkey. It wasn't flashy or gaudy, but its presence couldn't be denied.

Looking at Ruyue standing peacefully with his eyes closed, he had to say that she really looked like a work of art.

With her silvery-white hair flowing down her back, her smooth skin that was almost crystalline and shone like jade, her body that seemed to have been sculpted by the gods, with curves in all the right places, the lowkey crystalline bracelet was perfect.

It didn't take away from her beauty, and it didn't try to impose itself. Instead, it added a subtle charm to the perfection that she already embodied.

"Damien?" Ruyue called out, but he didn't answer. She subtly cracked her eyes open to check if anything was wrong, only to see him staring at her dumbly.

Her already rapid heartbeat quickened once more, but oddly enough, she didn't move. She stayed still and pretended that she didn't know anything.

It was only a long while later when Damien finally snapped out of his trance. Seeing that Ruyue was still standing with her eyes closed, he felt a bit sheepish.

He didn't know how long he had been staring at her so stupidly, but he knew it wasn't a short amount of time. A rare blush showed itself on his face as the thought.

‘The fuck? I’m blushing?’ He quickly shook his head to get rid of any stray thoughts. When he finally managed to regain focus, he saw Ruyue looking at her wrist and then back up at him with a smile.

That smile...that smile was so dazzlingly bright that he almost fell into another trance. Luckily, he managed to catch himself.

‘Phew, crisis averted...I think.’

Chapter 223 - White Dragon Grotto [1]

Although their talk had somehow devolved into a flirting session when Damien was trying to appear Ruyue, they still had to touch on the serious subjects.

With Damien’s gift somewhat alleviating the suffocating feeling in her chest, Ruyue also became more focused on pressing issues.

Just as Damien had thought earlier, she had also realized the problem. If they stayed in this White Dragon Grotto for too long, her training would stagnate.

“Sigh, I really can’t think of a solution. Maybe there’s a dragon here that specializes in elements similar to yours?” Damien suddenly spoke up.

But Ruyue only shook her head. “Even if there was, it’s not certain that they’d be willing to help me. If they want us to pay them some sort of price for help, we don’t actually have anything to give them.”

They didn't know what kind of currency or valuables actually held worth within this mountain range. Even if there were some similarities, there were bound to be plenty of cultural differences that would impede them at moments like this.

Luckily, the customs of this place weren't too different from the outside world. In the way, they didn't run the risk of accidentally offending anyone due to their ignorance.

"Then, what can we do?" Damien asked.

He felt wrong. There was no way he'd be able to properly enjoy and use this training environment if he knew that Ruyue was being hindered by it.

It'd definitely form a knot in his heart that would also affect his own training.

Ruyue sunk into thought. Although the White Dragon Grotto itself wasn't any help to her, this Endless Snow Mountain wasn't all that bad.

She had felt it previously and the feeling became even more pronounced when they moved up the mountain, the amount of yin-natured mana here was actually relatively abundant.

Perhaps it wasn't the perfect environment for her, but since when was there something like perfection? Even the Xue Clan, who had been giving birth to those with yin affinities for centuries, didn't have a training environment that they could truly call perfect.

But there was something about Ruyue that made this obstacle nothing more than a minuscule problem.

It was her level of affinity.

When one came into contact with mana for the first time, their affinities would bloom within them. And the system would then record that affinity under the [Affinities] section.

However, this wasn't a resolute measurement, but merely a record. This meant that there was no specification besides the actual nature of the affinity.

Basically, affinities weren't as simple as you have it or you don't. There were levels to even them.

For example, before Damien's status became a field of question marks, he had both a spatial affinity and a lightning affinity. But his progress in space was much faster than his progress in lightning.

The reason was simple. His affinity for space was leagues above his affinity for lightning. In Damien's case, it was because his spatial affinity was inborn and his lightning affinity was acquired later, but the example still stood.

It was possible for affinities to have varying levels of strength.

The Xue Clan was known for its production of yin affinity masters, but a case like Ruyue was exceedingly rare. Perhaps, she was the first ever to have such a grand degree of affinity.

If one thought about it, there was no way for an average yin affinity to have the level of diversity and functionality that Ruyue had. If that was the case, then the affinity would be something that only one in a billion people ever awakened, if not rarer.

But even in the Central Continent alone there was a whole clan that constantly pumped out yin affinity cultivators.

In most cases, a yin affinity would only encompass its base properties. It'd be an affinity largely similar to ice, but with an enhanced ability for defense and deflection.

But when Ruyue awakened, it was different. Her affinity went beyond such base concepts and embodied yin itself. The force that split along with yang and birthed all creation.

When Damien achieved his first class, he got a message from the system. First came Nihilism, then Creation and Destruction, Space and Time, Life and Death, and finally the 5 elements and all else.

The concepts of Yin and Yang, if their user was able to bring out their full potential like Ruyue, were forces on par with that of Creation and Destruction.

Perhaps it was for this reason that Ruyue was so special. Her level of affinity was unique perhaps even on a universal scale.

The reason this was important was that although the White Dragon Grotto was unsuitable for her, and even the Endless Snow Mountain wasn't entirely so; Ruyue was still able to achieve results here.

Her massive talent and affinity meant that even in such an environment, as long as she was surrounded by elements and mana that were even slightly yin natured, she'd be able to reap benefits, no matter how small they may be.

Thinking this far, Ruyue paused her train of thought to look at Damien. As it turned out, he was also submerged in his thoughts.

Every once in a while, his eyebrows would furrow and his forehead would wrinkle before he shook his head vehemently. Every once in a while, he would sneak a glance at Ruyue and fall deeper in thought.

This behavior was honestly a little cute, and it brought warmth to her heart when she realized how much it troubled Damien that he was “taking advantage of her.”

But seeing how troubled he looked was enough for her. Ruyue never felt that she was taken advantage of, she only felt a bit of grievance as a woman when he ignored her. Now that that grievance had vanished, she didn't have any qualms.

Seeing that he cared for her enough to even consider abandoning his ideal training environment was enough. After all, there were many people who would let their selfishness and greed take over at this point since a jump in power was all but guaranteed for him.

With that, Ruyue came to a decision. And honestly, it wasn't that hard to make.

“Damien,” she called out, “don't worry about me and go train in the arenas. I'll be fine here either way.”

Her words pulled Damien out of his thoughts. “Eh? This won't do at all. I can't take advantage of you this way and reap all the benefits myself. If you can't think of anything, don't worry. Just give me a bit of time and I'll work something out.”

Ruyue smiled lightly. “It’s not that. Actually, while you were thinking just now I felt a sort of calling in my body. I’m not sure what it is, but I think the aura in this place will actually help me comprehend something.”

“Huh?” Damien exclaimed in surprise.

Wasn’t that perfect? Even if she didn’t know what that feeling was, he didn’t doubt her. After all, he had had moments in the past where he felt something similar, and it was always positive when he ended up comprehending the feeling.

A wave of relief rushed over him. With Ruyue saying this, all his doubts and guilt were alleviated. If she was able to gain something good, he could also go train without worry.

“Hahaha! Good! If it’s like this, then we can truly become great during our stay here!”

Ruyue smiled at his words. Just as she thought, he would now be able to focus on his own training without worry.

Turning her head to the side, she noticed a faint blush on her cheeks. Luckily, Damien was too absorbed in his excitement to notice.

‘It’s just a small lie. It won’t hurt anyone.’ Ruyue smiled inwardly at the thought.

Chapter 224 White Dragon Grotto[2]

Since Ruyue's matter had been settled due to a flash of unexpected insight on her part, Damien was able to put his full focus into his new environment.

He had already mentioned it countless times before, but it was truly perfect for him. Even the minute amount of dragon aura within this Worm sector felt like it was nourishing his bloodline.

If it had to be said, Damien knew he was probably the least well off out of all those here. His dragon bloodline was a mixture of what he got from the Wyvern in the First Dungeon and the Sea Dragon from the Cloud Sea. These were the only two instances where he was able to devour dragon bloodlines.

In any other person's body, these two different dragon bloodlines would be fighting each other within their body, but Damien was the possessor of the Void Physique. This mysterious physique that he still didn't have any information about tamed the two bloodlines within him and slowly merged them.

This newly merged dragon bloodline was the one he currently possessed. And due to the domineering nature of dragons, the bloodline had set itself apart from the rest and become his primary blood, of course, aside from his original human blood.

The problem was, no matter how domineering they were, they were still sharing space with the other bloodlines Damien possessed. An unknown wolf, spider, and even goblin bloodline were mashed together along with that of every other beast he had devoured.

If there was one thing he was grateful for, it was that after a certain point in time, his Void Physique seemed to have become picky about the bloodlines it integrated into his body.

Like this, the bloodlines of all those beasts from the massive battle he and Ruyue fought before, as well as of all the other beasts Damien devoured since entering the Cloud Plane, hadn't become a part of him.

He didn't pay it much attention at the time, but now he was truly grateful. From the beginning, he knew that the devour ability was mysterious. Its ability to optimize his evolution and growth, as well as choose the traits and parts of devoured beasts it integrated into him, was nigh-sentient.

But he knew it wasn't the case. Even if the physique always managed to elude his senses and never actually allowed him to figure out its true abilities, he was still intrinsically connected to it. It was a physique, after all, it was a part of his body. PANDA-N(0)VEL.COM

He doubted whether any other physique was as weird as his own, seemingly existing as a part of him but also within a separate and mysterious space, but he didn't really care about that.

What made him happy was that his dragon bloodline wasn't any further tainted after he devoured the Sea Dragon, so continuous tempering through the ambient dragon aura as well as purification through battle should eventually be able to cleanse his blood.

'Though, it's a bit sad that I have to throw away some of these older bloodlines.'

The wolf bloodline was a connection he had to Zara, as well as the first bloodline he ever received. The goblin king bloodline symbolizes his triumph over his bestial instinct, allowing him to maintain his ego. Even that damn spider bloodline, no matter how much it disgusted him to carry the bloodline of those fiends, represented the conquering of his fear.

There were a myriad of bloodlines within him, most without value, but some held a sentimental value he couldn't bear to part with.

'But they won't completely disappear.'

The change in his cell structure and muscle arrangement in his legs that he got from the wolf would never leave.

The Absorption and Reflection trait he got from the Goblin King; although it had become useless already, would still represent his struggle at that time.

And his All-Seeing Eyes, which seemed almost as hard to develop as his Devour ability, would remain one of his most useful supportive abilities.

'That's right. I'm not abandoning those memories, but rebuilding them. Regardless of this useless sentimentality, strength is the most important thing in the world.'

Without strength, would he be able to hold those sentiments of his? Without strength, would he be able to live leisurely? The answer was a resounding no.

The strength he felt from his incomplete draconic transformation was incomparable. He felt that his physical strength had at least doubled and even his mana control had been heightened.

If it had to be described, he felt much more attuned with his body, allowing him to use it at its full power, unlike what he would do normally.

He craved the day when he would be able to feel such power while keeping his mind clear, and to do that, he needed to successfully train at the White Dragon Grotto.

As the flames of determination and fighting spirit blazed within his eyes, Damien arrived at one of the many dueling arenas on the first floor.

No matter how rowdy the area looked from the outside, there were still procedures to follow in order to fight. Otherwise, the place would just descend into pure chaos.

Damien headed over to one of the registration areas and gave his bronze medallion to the man at the desk.

"Damien Void. Just arrived. Worm Level."

"Hm?" The man had originally taken the medallion without much thought, but hearing that Damien had decided to fight on his very first day, a twinge of interest flashed across his eyes.

"Haha, another newbie, huh. It seems Senior Bai has really been collecting seedlings like crazy these days. Ah, right, you should be a 3rd class, right? Good, good."

The man kept mumbling to himself, occasionally asking Damien questions without giving him time to answer. A few minutes passed and the man handed Damien his medallion back.

"Alright; you've been registered without a hitch. Go ahead and watch the fights for now. When it's your turn, your medallion will vibrate to let you know. Newbie, remember not to underestimate your opponents in the arena. Everyone here is powerful. Alright, I've said enough. Good luck!"

Damien smiled at the man and walked into the arena. Inwardly, though, his mood became serious. 'Even the reception people are at 3rd class. What kind of level are those guys at the top?'

For around 3 hours, Damien sat silently in the rowdy atmosphere and watched the ongoing fights. They were blood-curdling and vicious, truly using death as entertainment. The fact that at the end of every battle, the loser was eaten by the winner was especially vulgar.

But Damien didn't mind much. Although cannibalism wasn't something he'd ever do, he didn't see a problem with others doing it. In the dungeon, there were plenty of races that cannibalized their own kind for strength. That was simply normal.

Finally, after a long wait, Damien felt the vibration of his medallion in his pocket. Without hesitation, he flashed onto the stage.

On the other end of the arena, a burly man with blood-red skin and eyes was staring back at him, bloodlust emanating from his body in waves.

"Oooh, this kid is actually a Worm!"

"Seriously? A Worm Level is actually so courageous?"

"Sadly, he got pit against this Borte guy. He isn't known as the Blood Dragon for nothing."

"But the newbie is still cut above the rest. Even in the face of Borte's bloodlust, he isn't cowering."

"True true."

In the arena, Damien paid no heed to the drivel of the audience and put his whole focus on his opponent. Unknowingly, he smirked.

"Kid, you dare show that kind of expression towards me?" Borte growled.

Damien smiled in response. "Against you, there's no need for me to cower."

"Fine then. I'll show you why newbies always fear the Blood Dragon." The bloodlust coming from Borte suddenly doubled.

Without giving them the opportunity for further banter, the light screens that separated them fell, signifying the start of the battle.

Borte stomped the ground and leaped forward, causing minute cracks in the surface. A massive double-sided axe emerged in his hand and he swung towards Damien's head violently.

"Ah, this newbie is done for."

"That Borte has a really short temper. It's the newbie's fault for being uninformed."

"Still, this is too much. If things continue like this, there won't be any newbie who makes it past the first battle."

From what the audience knew, there was no way someone who was just introduced to the environment of the White Drago Grotto would be able to contend with Borte. He was someone who had been fighting for years already.

Even if his lack of talent made it so he had stayed in the Snake level all these years, he still had leagues more experience than any fresh meat that just arrived.

And as the audience was thinking such thoughts...

Flash!

Boom!

"Devour."

Three distinct sounds presented themselves one after the other, instantly causing the formerly rowdy arena to go dead silent.

Chapter 225 White Dragon Grotto [3]

A bright flash of light.

A thundering explosion.

And then, a single word.

These three sounds utterly stunned the audience, who were unable to understand what they had just witnessed.

"T-that..."

"The Blood Dragon Borte just..."

"My eyes are playing tricks on me, right?"

They were all similar in strength, so even the weakest of them could somewhat understand what had just happened. It was just too inconceivable for them to accept it.

In one instant, Borte, who was in the air pouncing towards the newbie, was smashed to the ground and decapitated. The newbie who they had thought was frozen in fear had arrived behind him before they could even process it. PANDA-N(0)VEL.COM

Damien smiled as the familiar black smoke covered Borte's body and consumed him. Unexpectedly, this guy was so weak!

It wasn't like he had become so strong that he could pummel everyone in the arena like it was nothing. It was just, compared to the battles he had been fighting recently and those involved in them, Borte was truly subpar.

It had to be known that this Borte had spent many tens of years honing his combat experience. Even if his strength stayed weak, it shouldn't have been so easy to kill him.

But Borte was too arrogant. He looked down on Damien for being a newbie and didn't take the proper steps to gauge his strength before attacking, and even then he didn't put his all into his attack.

Damien felt that this was the stupidest thing he could've possibly done. Although he too had held back his strength and fought recklessly many times, this wasn't the same as back then.

This place was filled with true life or death struggles, unlike the Nexus Event on Apeiron when he had fought while concealing his strength just so he could have more fun.

In a situation like this, it was obvious that one should use their full strength no matter what. Even if the other party was an ant, it was better to be safe than sorry.

But Damien didn't spend much time thinking about Borte. Now that he had been killed in such a manner, there was no way anyone would make the same mistake against him in the future. But this was just as well.

He wanted to earn his gains. Not only that, but he would also gain tons of combat experience this way. He would be able to refine his strategic battle thinking, which was unlike the combat sense he developed back in the day.

That was primal, this was refined. Both combined together into one being would become unstoppable.

As Damien thought about these things, he felt his Void Physique doing its job well, integrating the bloodline of Borte into his own.

Oddly enough, there were no compatibility issues like when he devoured the Sea Dragon. This made the process smooth and easy, slightly strengthening his bloodline.

But he was curious. Why was it that so many differing bloodlines could be fused and purified so easily, especially for those normal people who didn't even have a physique like his? Not only that, but the fact that only the specific dragon bloodline of the other party would be devoured instead of their entire bloodline was also odd.

After all, if one simply devoured without thought, they would also devour the impurities in the other side's bloodline. This way, the entire practice method of the White Dragon Grotto would become counterproductive.

When Damien walked out of the arena, he ignored the countless stares he received from the crowd and went straight to the reception area.

His win would be catalogued automatically, so he could already be considered a Snake level combatant. He also realized that the color of his medallion had slightly changed, becoming a jade green color instead.

But even if the processes were automated, he wanted an answer to his previous question, so he still made his way to the reception.

When Damien asked the people at the reception area, the response he got was actually relatively simple.

"Ah, that? To be honest, not many have questioned that mechanic at all. Actually, it's all thanks to our Leader Bai that we can enjoy such an easy practice method. Otherwise, none of this would be possible."

In short, they praised the White Dragon King and his omnipotent power. Damien wasn't able to get a straight answer.

'None of these guys actually know the answer, do they...'

He realized that like the clerk said, nobody questioned the actual reasoning, instead opting to just enjoy the benefits without care.

This was fine too, but he couldn't shake his curiosity as easily as that. Sighing lightly, he pushed the question to the back of his mind.

'If I get the chance, I'll ask Senior Bai about it personally.'

According to the rules, one was allowed to fight 10 times per day before they were forced to stop, but not many actually capitalized on this. If they won, they'd have to properly digest their gains before fighting once more.

They also wouldn't risk the danger of fighting when even slightly tired, since the consequence of failure was death.

But Damien didn't have the same problems. His Void Physique integrated his gained bloodline almost immediately while simultaneously using the rest of his opponent's body as nutrients to refill his stamina.

On his first day, he didn't choose to fight again since he had just promoted to Snake Level, but that didn't mean he'd follow the same formula every time. It was inevitable for him to fight more rapidly than the rest due to his many advantages.

In fact, he did exactly that. Although he didn't fight 10 times a day, he would return to the arena daily and at least fight twice. While the fights were relatively hard, they honestly weren't good enough to attract his attention.

This was the problem with the Snake Level. It was the bottom rung, filled with those who couldn't actually benefit him much even if they were devoured.

When he realized this, Damien hastened his speed, wanting to reach the Wyvern class as soon as possible. Perhaps there he would finally find some worthy opponents.

His wins slowly racked up and the fear those Snake Level combatants had towards him befame leagues higher than what they had towards Borte. In only a week, he had already climbed past the 50 win mark.

Sitting in his new residence which was at least more sanitary than the previous shack, Damien spoke to Ruyue.

"Looks like we'll finally have the chance to move into some good housing soon." He said.

"Ah, are you going to challenge the Wyvern Class?" She asked back. Over the past week, although she hadn't left their residence much, she had been paying attention to his progress. Or rather, he would always come brag to her about it.

"Right. These guys don't really contribute to my bloodline at all. It's like adding a drop of water into a lake and expecting the water level to rise."

"Hmm, although I don't know the difference between the Snake and Wyvern levels, the fact that there is such clear segregation must mean that the strength difference is generally noticeable. You can't treat the battle as lightly as you have been doing recently."

"Relax," Damien smiled, "I've been taking it seriously from the beginning. There's no way I'll die in some insignificant corner of the world like this."

Finishing his small conversation with Ruyue, Damien once again made his way back to the arena. This time, to ascend to the next level.

Chapter 226 White Dragon Grotto [4]

"Did you guys hear? There's a challenge happening!"

"Huh? It's just a challenge, why are you so excited about it?"

"This is not just any challenge, it's an advancement challenge!"

"What?! Someone is challenging the Wyvern Level?! Who has the balls?"

"It's that newcomer, Damien. Tsk tsk, he's only been here for a week and he's already stacked up enough wins for an advancement challenge."

"He did it in a week? Damn, this might actually be something to pay attention to!"

Multiple conversations were happening as news of Damien's challenge spread through the Snake level. Besides those newbies who entered around a similar time as Damien, everyone was aware of the significance of such a challenge.

In fact, it was rare for someone to have the courage to initiate an advancement challenge. Most would instead choose to wait and procure 100 wins before advancing naturally, since it was the safer option.

After all, with their lives on the line, it was best to be cautious about such choices.

So when Damien issued the challenge, practically the entire Snake level congregated towards the arena to watch.

Meanwhile, Damien was standing patiently in the arena. According to the receptionists, after his challenge had been issued, a Wyvern level disciple at his same class range would have to answer it. If nobody answered it, then it would be randomly chosen. Either way, he would be fighting a Wyvern level combatant today.

It took an entire 5 hours of waiting before someone actually showed up. A powerful aura spread through the arena as a man suddenly appeared in the air above it.

His hair was jet black like his eyes, his face was chiseled to perfection, and his entire body was covered in a jade-colored scale armor.

An air of arrogance surrounded him as he looked down upon the Snake level combatants. "Which one of you actually dared to initiate an advancement challenge?"

Damien looked up at the man in the sky and flashed forward, appearing in front of him. "It was me."

"You? The blood in your body doesn't even have the qualifications to hold its head up in front of me, and you dare to challenge me? Do you understand what you're getting into?"

"If I didn't understand, then would I have challenged you in the first place? Stop talking and come fight me, bozo."

The man's eyebrow imperceptibly twitched. Although he didn't know what bozo meant, it was clear from Damien's tone that he was being provoked.

"Fine, then. My name is Igor. If you wish to die so soon, I shall grant your wish."

Boom!

Igor kicked the air and arrived in front of Damien as if teleporting, but from the way the air around him was torn apart, it was clear that it was pure speed that achieved this feat.

A swift fist charged towards Damien's face. 'I can't dodge this.'

Although he could teleport, he was saving that card until later. The element of surprise was always best.

Damien crossed his arms in front of his face, receiving the punch head-on. The impact caused a small bang as he was pushed hundreds of feet backwards.

"You can't even stand this much?" Igor mocked. "If it's truly the case, then I suggest you get off the stage right now."

But Damien didn't listen to his words. Just like Igor did previously, he kicked off the air and charged forward, his entire body becoming coated in lightning.

His fist shot towards Igor's face, causing the latter to smirk. He also threw out a punch to meet Damien's fist.

But just as they were about to connect, Damien suddenly pulled back, drawing an arc of scolding hot electricity as he moved.

Igor was unable to stop his forward momentum in then, crashing into the arc of plasma at full speed.

"Argh!"

The scales on his armor began to melt, exposing the fair skin beneath. He hastily pulled back his fist.

Damien grinned. "What now? You don't have anything to say?"

Igor gritted his teeth. 'This kid, he's not simple. In the first exchange, I'm already at a disadvantage.'

Igor realized that Damien wasn't someone he could underestimate. At that thought, a jade green lightning began to cover his body.

Whoosh!

The two looked at each other solemnly before flashing forward once again.

Two streaks of light charged at each other, one black and one green, before making impact. Fists connected endlessly and sparks of green and black lightning flew wildly around the arena.

Each time they connected, neither was able to gain an advantage. Igor was starting to feel the pressure. Although he was a Wyvern class combatant, he was also a 3rd class being.

There was no such thing as holding an overwhelming advantage against someone like Damien, who was also extremely powerful at the same class level.

Igor gritted his teeth. "Green Dragon Claws!"

His hand opened and his fingers curled into a claw, sharpening immensely into something comparable to an SSS tier artifact.

He slashed down towards Damien, embedding his fingers into the latter's shoulders and yanking downwards.

"Argh!"

A chunk of flesh was torn from Damien's shoulder, causing blood to spurt onto Igor's face. But Damien wasn't one to take things lightly.

As Igor's hand entered his shoulder, his own hand became coated in a glove of lightning that then began to superheat. Damien silently used an ability he hadn't touched in a while to cause the molecules around his hand to vibrate, creating an even denser coating of plasma.

Instead of dodging Igor's attack, he took it with his body, using the time that Igor took to tear through his flesh to charge his own attack.

And when his blood spurted out, momentarily obstructing Igor's vision, his hand shot forward.

But Igor wasn't some newbie without experience. Sensing danger, his claw shot towards Damien's eyes.

Scratch!

A bloody hash was torn in his face, distracting Damien for a split second. But a split second meant many things in a battle like this.

The pain in his eye forced him to divert his attention from the plasma coating his hand. But this seemingly simple mistake was anything but.

Not only was there supercharged lighting, but also rapidly vibrating molecules around his hand. The mixture of power was largely unstable and only gained stability under Damien's control.

Boom!

The unstable plasma around his hand exploded, sending Igor flying backward like a shooting star.

"Cough..."

He coughed blood continuously, his hand holding the gaping hole that was formed in his side. Damien's attack almost reached him by the time he reacted, so he had taken considerable damage even if he managed to subvert it slightly.

But if Damien's hand had gone unobstructed, Igor's heart would've already been melted by that insane heat. A hole in his side was nothing in comparison.

The crowd watching the exchange was stunned. The battle hadn't gone on for long, but the Wyvern level combatant had already been injured to such a degree. In curiosity, some of them looked over at Damien as well.

"Hisss..." The sight caused many people to suck in a breath of cold air.

The unstable plasma around Damien's hand had exploded without his control, so obviously he would've suffered from it as well. Although he managed to quickly erect his Vector Field to offset most of the damage, he wasn't able to save the hand that had been coated by that plasma.

In place of that hand, there was now a mangled mess of flesh and bone shards that resembled ground beef more than it did a hand. This was a kind of injury that could be considered crippling unless one had the appropriate level of healer around to save them.

Seeing the scene, Igor laughed. "I admit that you're good enough to become a Wyvern Class combatant with that kind of power, but with your hand like that, there's no chance for you to make it far."

He kept laughing. It was funny, his injury was bad but still healable, especially with the accommodations of Wyvern level. But Damien would be stuck in Snake level, where he would be crippled permanently.

Igor had no plans of killing Damien today. In any case, his bloodline wouldn't be of any help to his evolution. Smiling lightly, he shakily stood up, planning to end the battle once and for all.

But when he lifted his head, fear took root in his heart. Damien had arrived before him in an instant. There was no sound produced by his movements, not even the air had been affected.

Staring at Igor with cold eyes, he spoke. "Crippled? You consider this to be crippled?"

He held up his hand, which had been a mangled mess a few minutes prior. But with the hand this close to him, Igor could clearly see those bones putting themselves back together and the muscles and flesh returning to their original position.

Damien had already begun healing from that so-called crippling injury, and he looked like he didn't care about it one bit.

Without paying any heed to Igor's reaction, Damien held out his other hand and grabbed his stunned opponent's neck.

"Distort."

Crack!"

Space twisted and bent, concentrating on Igor's neck. Igor hastily tried to use his mana to protect himself, but it didn't seem to listen to his command.

Damien had already used his Vector Control to seal Igor's mana. This was a move that could only be used with prolonged contact, so Damien hadn't used it much before. But in this situation; it was perfect.

Without being able to use mana to fight back, Igor could only helplessly watch as space twisted around his neck and cracked it in two. In the next instant, his vision went black.

"Devour."

The second his opponent's life force faded, a black fog left Damien's hand and consumed him. That Igor who had once been a Wyvern level combatant had died just like that.

Damien lightly shook his left hand, which had finally reached the last stages in the healing process, before looking at his medallion.

Its color was slowly changing from jade green to gold.

'Wyvern level, huh...perhaps that's where the fight truly begins.'

Chapter 227 White Dragon Grotto [5]

It had been a month and a half since Damien's battle with Igor and his promotion to Wyvern level.

This month and a half could be considered both eventful and uneventful at the same time. Damien simply didn't know which category it fell into.

On one side, he had been battling constantly with people at his own level. Unlike the Snake level, the combatants at the Wyvern level actually had some ability.

Although it wasn't able to push his limits, his combat experience had indeed increased. Stupid mistakes like losing his hand due to the instability of elements like what happened during his fight with Igor would most likely not happen again.

Though, the future couldn't be predicted, so he couldn't say for sure.

At the Wyvern level, the number of people qualified to reach the Dragon level was much higher than those in the Snake level qualified to enter the Wyvern level.

In general, the quality of combatants was higher. Nobody who entered here could do so out of luck, and nobody let their fear overtake their desire for improvement.

In this kind of environment, even after a month and a half, Damien wasn't able to challenge the 10 times a day limit, at most challenging 6 or 7 times before returning home to rest.

The house itself wasn't very big, similar to a one-bedroom apartment, but it was much better than the tiny shack he had been given before.

Not to mention, there was higher quality food and bedding in comparison. Damien rarely used the bed, but he appreciated the upgraded room since Ruyue, who would rarely leave the house, would live more comfortably.

Ruyue's life had been relatively dull since they arrived at White Dragon Grotto. She had made little improvement in any area, since there wasn't a situation to foster her growth, but she was at least able to absorb the elemental essence of the Endless Snow Mountain and use it to attempt comprehension towards her affinities.

Progress was slow, but at least it was progress. It was enough for her to tell Damien that she was improving, lessening his worries.

And he had plenty of worries. His expectations for the White Dragon Grotto had been high at the start, and they remained high, but he had recently encountered a major problem.

The bodies of these normal individuals with dragon bloodline weren't the same as his. For them, under the training environment created by Senior Bai, the constant consumption of other bloodlines would lead to the purification and growth of their own.

This was the essence of the White Dragon Grotto.

But Damien was different. He was the bearer of the Void Physique. The number of opponents he had killed and devoured over this month and a half numbered in the hundreds, so the level of dragon bloodline he had was substantially increased, but that was it.

Whether it came to the purification aspect or the control aspect, neither was able to improve, even in the current conditions.

From what he had theorized, his Void Physique was indeed the cause of this. Unlike others, he could achieve perfect integration and balance. From the years he had been training, this was the function of the Void Physique he had long since discovered.

But the problem was, the physique never purged anything, it only improved. His other bloodlines were terrible right now, and the amount of influence they had on him would be reduced due to the integration of more dragon bloodline, but they wouldn't disappear.

This meant that he could either go through a similar process as he was doing with his dragon bloodline with his other bloodlines, strengthening them and having his Void Physique balance them and turning him into a chimera, or he could leave them be.

But he wanted neither. He wanted to purify his bloodline until only dragon bloodline remained. At that point, rather than his status saying "Half-Human/Half-Beast," it'd say "Half-Human/Half-Dragon".

That human part of him would never leave unless he chanced upon some miraculous circumstances, with his integrated bloodlines having to share the other half, but he didn't mind this.

Still, that wasn't the point. Currently, the only purification he could receive was from the ambient dragon aura that provided passive purification.

But that was extremely slow. If he had to quantify it, his bloodline had been purified around 1% in his entire stay. With this rate of purification, it'd take him close to 9 years to completely purify his bloodline of any outside influence.

For others, this could be considered as an average rate of purification. Some of the combatants had even stayed within this grotto for tens of years and hadn't achieved a pure bloodline.

Especially when considering the fact that Damien could only receive passive purification, this rate of improvement could be considered insane.

But it wasn't nearly enough for him. In the first place, he only had 7 more months within the 3000 Beast Mountain Range, and he didn't plan on staying in the Endless Snow Mountain the entire time.

Obviously, exploring the entire area was impossible, but he at least wanted to visit that massive tree in the center.

At the moment, his dragon bloodline had become strong enough for him to achieve a complete transformation. Although he couldn't totally control it, he at least was able to maintain a sliver of reasoning.

In the end, he had benefitted from this environment. It was just that such benefit wasn't enough. It didn't live up to his expectations.

Damien sighed lightly.

"Do you want to leave this place?" Ruyue's voice suddenly woke him from his thoughts.

"Sigh, I'm not sure. I'll be able to strengthen my bloodline more if I reach the Dragon level, but that won't really matter. I won't be able to bring out the strength of my bloodline unless I can find a way to purify it, which seems impossible in this place."

Ruyue looked at his helpless expression and shook her head. "This type of opportunity is rare as is. It's almost impossible for us to find something that'll immediately get the results you want. If we stay, at least you know what you're getting into, but if we leave, it's unknown. It might be fruitful, but it also might be useless."

Damien fell into thought. Although Ruyue's words sounded like they were trying to make him dispirited, he knew that she was only speaking the truth. This was exactly what he needed to hear.

Bullshit that would just feed his ego or give him false hope was, after all, bullshit. He didn't need that.

Ruyue had become a lot more thoughtful since they entered the mountain range, either that or she had become gentler.

And Damien was the same. The consideration she had for him ever since they had gotten into this situation made his attitude a lot gentler. The bickering they used to do was a much rarer sight nowadays.

"Ahh, I don't know what to do." Damien sighed in exasperation, falling limply to the side.

Due to the position they were sitting in, with Ruyue on the bed and Damien on the floor next to her, his head ended up on her lap.

But neither of them moved to remedy it. Damien was enjoying the feeling of Ruyue's thighs while she was feeling an unknown emotion that stopped her.

After sitting in silence for a few minutes, Damien finally spoke once more. "Let's leave."

"Are you sure?"

"Yeah, I'm sure. I'd rather cling to the possibility of gaining something than continue on this path that I know won't give me anything. Even if we end up wasting time in the end, it'll just be the consequences of my own decisions."

Damien slowly stood up, stretching his body.

"Plus, don't think I didn't notice. You didn't actually gain a spark of insight, did you?"

"Ah..." Ruyue opened her mouth, but no words came out.

"Relax. You don't need to feel bad about being the reason for us leaving, since I was planning to leave anyway. But I can no longer force you to endure while I reap all the benefits. We came here so both of us can get stronger. It's not right for me to be selfish."

Ruyue smiled lightly. Indeed, she would've felt extremely guilty if she had been the reason for him leaving. But his words had slightly calmed her heart.

The two of them spoke for a little longer, trying to hatch plans for how they were going to move after departing, when suddenly, Damien's golden medallion shone with splendor.

"Eh? What is this?" Damien took the medallion out and looked at it.

A projection of Senior Bai suddenly showed up. "Hahaha, kid, I heard you want to leave."

"Ah..." This time, it was Damien's turn to be speechless.

Seeing his expression, Senior Bai broke out into a fit of laughter. "Don't worry, kid, I wasn't spying on your love nest. There just happens to be a feature involved in your medallion that allows me to know when the topic of leaving the grotto is spoken about.

"It's not to pry or anything, but I can't let those ungrateful fellows who want to take without gratitude and then disappear off easy, right?"

"Anyway, I know you aren't like them. I've been watching your progress recently, since your rise was pretty meteoric even compared to some of the top talents here. I noticed that your bloodline hasn't been purified at all, regardless of how much you strengthen it.

"To be honest, I've never seen a case like yours before. This environment was made specifically for people like you, yet it seems to be hindering you.

"And so, I have an opportunity for you. Well, it's both an opportunity for you and a mission that you can do for me as thanks for saving your life back then."

Chapter 228 - Heaven-Sent Oppurtunity [1]

"And so, I have an opportunity for you. Well, it's both an opportunity for you and a mission that you can do for me as thanks for saving your life back then."

"Eh? An opportunity?"

Although it usually wouldn't be so easy to pique Damien's interest, this was an offer from a genuine 4th class Beast King. There was no way it'd be simple.

"That's right. An opportunity."

"Please speak, Senior Bai."

“Hmm, this isn’t something I’d like to talk about in such a distant manner. Hold your girl close and don’t resist the mana of your medallion.

Damien raised his brow in curiosity, but still followed instructions. He grabbed Ruyue’s waist and allowed the mana, which he soon discovered was spatial mana, to envelop him.

In the next instant, the two were within a completely new space. It was an unadorned cave that didn’t stand out too much, but the mana density was off the charts.

‘A place like this actually exists?!’

Ruyue was stunned by the sight. Even she, who came from such a major power herself, and was also the disciple of the Great Elder of the 2nd greatest sect in the entire world for many years, had never seen such a rich mana environment.

‘This place can be considered as a cultivator’s heaven!’

Clap! Clap!

Two resounding claps snapped the duo out of their daze, their attention focusing on the white-haired man sitting cross-legged on a prayer mat in the middle of the cave.

“Come sit, then we can talk about the good stuff.”

The duo quickly followed his instructions, not daring to take too long. Even Damien reined in his ego in front of this being who would have no qualms with killing them if he was offended. This wasn't a situation like Tian Yang. Damien could be willful around the latter because of their master-disciple relationship, as well as the fact that he knew the latter's personality.

But with the White Dragon King, it was different. Regardless of how Damien respected the former's mentality and ways, he didn't have a good grasp on his personality. It wasn't the time to be rash.

When the two had made themselves comfortable, the White Dragon King finally began to speak.

"Have you two ever heard the legend of the Primordial Undying Tree?"

"Primordial Undying Tree?" The two were instantly captivated.

"That's right. The Primordial Undying Tree is a legendary tree that can be classified as a Heavenly Treasure. Its roots can be used to craft pills that can revive one like a Phoenix from near death, its sap can extend one's lifespan by hundreds of years, and its leaves have a defense that can even block the attack of a Beast King."

Damien and Ruyue's eyes widened. A treasure like this would cause upheaval if it was introduced into the outside world. Its effects were simply too inconceivable.

"But that's not all," the White Dragon King continued. "The most crucial part of the Primordial Undying Tree is its fruits. Every 100 years, it bears 10 red fruits, every 1000, it bears 5 green fruits, and every 10,000, it bears a single purple fruit."

“Each of these fruits could be considered a peak treasure, but they obviously don’t have the same level of effect. The red fruits will strengthen the body once and green fruits are said to strengthen the body 10 times. As for the level of strengthening, that varies depending on the person.

“The purple fruit, however, is vastly greater than the other two. The purple fruit is said to transform the body! The body will be reconstructed from the root, granting intense strengthening as well as purification of all impurities! This kind of fruit is a heaven-sent gift for all!”

Damien let out an audible gasp. In fact, he almost shot up in shock. This kind of treasure...wasn’t it exactly what he needed? Forget about all the other effects, purification of all impurities, wouldn’t that rid his body of the unnecessary bloodlines he had been fretting over just recently?

But, why would the White Dragon King tell them about this?

As if reading their thoughts, the White Dragon King smiled wryly.

“Truth be told, no matter how amazing these treasures are, the fruits of the Primordial Undying Tree have no effect on Beast Kings. Only those below this level can reap the rewards.”

He shook his head in disappointment as he spoke. “There is no easy path on the road to strength. For us, who have reached the pinnacle beneath Divinity, the only treasures that can ease our path are those that appear rarely even within the wider universe.”

The way the White Dragon King spoke was as if he had personally experienced such things before. There was a trace of reminiscence and nostalgia in his gaze, but it quickly vanished.

“The reason I’m telling you this is because the Primordial Undying Tree has once again revealed itself after 10,000 years! 10 red fruits! 5 green fruits! And a single purple fruit! Each and every one of them will be up for grabs.

“As for the location, the Primordial Undying Tree is actually located within the World Tree that adorns the center of our beautiful mountain range.”

The White Dragon King’s gaze sharpened. “I want the two of you to participate in the upcoming event to obtain the fruits of the Primordial Undying Tree.”

The direction of the conversation had pretty obviously been heading in that direction, but Damien was shocked nonetheless. This offer was extremely attractive, to the point where he was almost salivating at the thought. The only thing that concerned him was...

‘Why is he asking me?’

In the first place, the White Dragon King and Damien could be said to have no relationship whatsoever. From the very start, the White Dragon King made it clear that he held no interest in Damien.

He had only done what he did because Damien had dragon bloodline. Due to the nature of the grotto he was in charge of, saving Damien was only a matter of course.

Sure, Damien was abnormally talented, enough to even reach Dragon level if he stayed long enough, but that didn’t matter.

Because the White Dragon King knew.

Damien was a human, and so was Ruyue. Even if Damien was, at this point, half beast, he was originally human and his aura remained dominated by his human side.

Were there any natural-born humans in the 3000 Beast Mountain Range? Sure, but the number would only be in the tens at most. The number of humans that had successfully survived in this hellish environment wasn't high, after all.

But being a Beast King, how could the White Dragon King not be able to differentiate? He knew Damien and Ruyue's origins from the moment he laid eyes on them, he just wasn't bothered to care.

But at a time like this, such origins actually worked in his favor.

The White Dragon King let out a forlorn sigh. "I have a son. A single son that was born after countless years of effort. After my son was born, my wife perished from the strain of childbirth."

The duo was startled. The gloomy atmosphere that suddenly covered the White Dragon King came from nowhere.

"At that time, I was simply known as Bai Longxuan. I was a young man on a perilous and riveting journey through the myriad worlds. Through some circumstances, I ended up on this Cloud Plane and fell in love with my late wife.

"However, there is a large gap in my memory. By some unknown means, I ended up in this 3000 Beast Mountain Range with no way to leave. I've tried for thousands of years to do so, but to no avail.

“But you are different. You aren’t like me. You were chosen by this place and allowed to enter; which means at some point, you’ll be allowed to leave. Be it one year or a thousand, it doesn’t change the fact that you will be able to leave.”

“...Chosen?”

The White Dragon King ignored the doubt-filled question and continued speaking.

“I want you to acquire a green fruit from the Primordial Undying Tree, as well as some of its sap. When you leave, I want you to deliver it to my son. Although I do not know how much time passed before I arrived in this mountain range, I’m sure my son will still be on this planet.”

Taking out a pristine white pendant, the White Dragon King sighed once more. “I can sense his presence through this pendant, but I can’t reach him! I can’t! No matter how I try, no matter how close he is, I can’t see his face!”

There was evident agony in his voice. Damien and Ruyue couldn’t help but sympathize. Thousands, perhaps even tens of thousands of years of waiting and watching the pendant, hoping his son was alive, hoping he’d get to see him again, but with no results or hope. It sounded like torture.

“If you grasp this opportunity, I want you to swear a Heavenly Oath! An oath that you will find my son and deliver the fruit and sap to him, along with a spatial ring filled with items I have prepared. If you take them selfishly for yourself, or go against your word, may the Heavens reclaim your strength!”

“A Heavenly Oath?” This was the first time Damien heard of such a concept. The system never intervened and always stayed in the background, silently recording progress. Was it possible for it to have such a mechanism?

“That’s right. A Heavenly Oath. If you refuse it, you can forget about everything we talked about. I won’t allow you to grasp the opportunity, no matter how hard you try.”

Damien furrowed his brows. There was a guarantee that the White Dragon King’s son was both alive and on the Cloud Plane, so it shouldn’t be a problem to deliver him the goods. And the only people Damien had enmity with was the Eclipsing Shadow Sect.

But this wasn’t a decision he could make by himself. There was no way the Primordial Undying Tree would just open its leaves and allow its fruit to be plucked.

A tree like this that has lived for countless millennia would have the sentience to set trials and conditions for earning its fruit.

This excursion would most likely be leagues more dangerous than any secret realm. It’d be a place where they’d be competing with hundreds or thousands of others for the sake of a mere 16 fruits. The possibility of death was extremely high.

Damien looked at Ruyue, his intent clear. If he was going to agree, he’d only do it with her consent.

Ruyue had been listening to the whole conversation as well. Unlike the White Dragon Grotto, this experience would benefit her training as well. Walking the line between life and death for the sake of bountiful reward...

Ruyue couldn’t help but feel the cold blood in her body begin to boil. Regardless of anything, she was a cultivator. She had been fostered and raised in stable environments her whole life, but she was still a cultivator.

This kind of life and death experience, this kind of rich reward, this kind of adventure, deep within her core, she craved it.

Perhaps she would be afraid if she was doing it alone, perhaps if she was still the Xue Ruyue from the months before Damien showed up, she would have preferred her sheltered lifestyle and refused. But she wasn't that same little girl anymore.

With the help of a certain man, she had shed her precious insecurity and immaturity. The trip they had taken so far had helped her immensely.

She was no longer afraid of the outside world, afraid of her feelings, and afraid of death. Besides, even if she truly were to die, she'd die with the one she...

Shaking off useless thoughts, a cold fire bloomed within her eyes. Looking straight into Damien's eyes, she nodded her head firmly.

With a bright smile, Damien finally spoke up. "Good! Senior White Dragon, we shall take you up on this opportunity."

Chapter 229 - Heaven-Sent Opportunity [2]

"Good! Senior White Dragon, we shall take you up on this opportunity."

Hearing the positive response, the White Dragon King smiled. In fact, he didn't expect anything less. This wasn't the kind of thing that just anyone could reject.

“Haha, I’m glad it’s so. Now, there are many more details that I refrained from telling you yet, but before we get into those, I want the two of you to swear the Heavenly Oath.”

“Senior, how does a Heavenly Oath work?” Damien questioned. He had obviously seen the concept before considering his cultivation novel obsession, but this wasn’t the same as that.

In those words, the ruling entity known as the Heavens was basically an impartial authority, punishing cultivators for going against heaven’s will through tribulations and bearing witness to their oaths.

Heavenly Oaths, for this reason, were sacred and unchallengeable. The only way to get around it was to leave loopholes in the path that was sworn.

But in real life, there wasn’t such a ruling authority. The system was definitely something similar, but intrinsically, their purposes were different. The system also impartially watched all creation, but it did so from more of a bystander perspective than an authority.

It simply recorded all events that took place and catalogued what needed to be catalogued. It’d grant titles for immense achievements, but even that was of the same perspective.

Besides that, the system was much more interactive. The status sheet that all beings that trained under it gained was an example, as were the aforementioned titles. Such concepts as Heavenly Oaths didn’t seem to make sense in context.

But the White Dragon King wasn’t privy to Damien’s doubts. He simply took the matter in stride and continued explaining. “Heavenly Oaths are incredibly simple. You just have to swear an oath to the Records, and if you renege, let it reclaim your strength!”

“Reclaim our strength?”

“That’s right. Although it is possible to make oaths where death is the punishment, that is not my goal. Our strength, while it is indeed our own, comes from mana. And the Heavens somewhat embody mana. Even I am not of an appropriate level to accurately ascertain how it does so, but I’ve seen it happen before. The Heavens can indeed take the mana from our bodies and leave us crippled, never able to gain strength again.”

Damien almost couldn’t contain his shock. There was such a measure? If it was possible, didn’t it mean that the system could turn anyone into a cripple as long as it deemed fit?

“Haha, boy, I can see what you’re thinking. But you don’t have to worry so much. The Heavens don’t have true sentience, they don’t have such things as thought and emotion. Unless there is a matter such as a Heavenly Oath that compels it to act, it won’t do so.”

Damien sighed in relief. So it was like that. The word “system” was really apt to describe it. It was something akin to a machine with limited artificial intelligence.

With that concern out of the way, Damien decided to swear his oath without hesitation. They were already this far in, there was no point in dilly-dallying.

“I, Damien Void, swear upon the Records to deliver Senior Bai’s spatial ring to his son without touching the contents within. I will also do my utmost to obtain a green fruit and sap from the Primordial Undying Tree for the same purpose. If I renege on this oath, may the Records reclaim my strength!”

For the first time in many years, a system window popped up in front of Damien’s eyes.

[You have sworn a Deliverance Oath. The conditions have been set. If the contents of the oath are violated, the Records will reclaim all mana within your body.]

[You are the first person from the beginner world [Earth] to discover the Deliverance Oath. Your Legend has been advanced.]

A feeling of binding wrapped around the core of his being. It was an awkward constricting feeling, but it soon vanished. But this feeling was enough for Damien to know that the severity of the oath was real.

The familiar system windows made Damien feel a sense of nostalgia. When was the last time he even checked his status? With everything going on, he usually didn't bother with it.

Not only that, but his way to strength had been different recently. Rather than gaining new things or trying to further progress, he was consolidating the array of moves he already had as well as trying to bring out the full potential of his body.

Like this, his status never saw any major changes. Perhaps his physical stats were much different than they were back then, but his skills most likely hadn't changed much.

And on a more personal note, he felt it was more fun this way. It would be exciting to see the vastly different status he'd have after not checking it for so long.

'I'll check it again after this coming event. Especially if I can get my hands on a purple fruit and consume it, I wonder what my stats would look like at that time...'

While Damien was in his thoughts, Ruyue also swore her oath, and seeing that the necessary processes were over, the White Dragon King finally began speaking about the contents of the coming event.

“Obviously for such a massive event, there needs to be limits on the number of participants. Otherwise, it’d be utter chaos. Last time the Primordial Undying Tree showed itself to the world, this chaos had almost ensued, so we Beast Kings came together with the people who inhabit the World Tree to create a standard.

“20 people from each mountain, and 20 people from the tree dwellers. In total, 1,020 people will be participating. Each and every one of them will be a genius in their own right. However, the fact that all participating parties are geniuses doesn’t discount the risk.

“Of those 1,020 people who participated 10,000 years ago, only 300 made it out alive. And even then, many were killed afterwards in disputes over the rewards.”

“Hisss...” Damien and Ruyue sucked in a cold breath at the statistics.

Only around 30% were able to survive. That was an insanely low rate. Only now were they realizing how dangerous this excursion would truly be.

“The Primordial Undying Tree is many millennia old, perhaps even older than this entire mountain range. Its sentience isn’t something that can be underestimated. Every time it opens, it creates a small realm filled with trials and tribulations to properly judge the people who get its fruit.

“As a tree species, it isn’t necessarily greedy to keep its own fruit, but it is highly aware of its status. There’s no way any ordinary person would be allowed near it. These trials are the main

reason why people die within the so-called Primordial Undying Realm, while the other reason is their fellow competitors.

“Within that realm, you can be said to have the Primordial Undying Tree’s absolute protection. Though it won’t interfere with conflict that happens within the realm, there will be no outside influence allowed.

“Therefore, even if you die, I cannot help you at all, and it’s the same for the rest of the competitors. Even artifacts and such from Beast Kings will not function within that realm. There’s no way to use background to scare people off, only true strength can speak.”

Chapter 230 - 230 Heaven-Sent Opportunity [3]

“Since the contents of the Primordial Undying Realm change every time it opens, I can’t brief you on what you can expect to encounter. All I can say is, never lower your guard.”

The duo nodded. Even without his warning, there was no way they’d take it lightly. Just the 70% death rate was enough to bring them to a state of utmost solemnity.

“Alright. I’ve given you an overview of the event, and I’ve also gotten your oaths. From my White Dragon Grotto, only the two of you are participating, so remember, don’t lose face! I know you don’t have any connection here and perhaps don’t care about such things, but since this is an endeavor that benefits both of us, I’ll naturally reward you for your help.

“As for what the rewards will be, that depends on whether or not you can make it out of the Primordial Undying Realm alone, for now, I can at most give you Chaos rank armor or weapons to help you.

The White Dragon King then took out a book that he handed to Damien. “And finally, there’s this. This is the 3000 Beast Record. It is a record of all the top geniuses within the mountain range, as

well as their backgrounds and general information. It is ranked based on power and achievements, so make sure to focus more on those at the top of the list.

“Now that I’ve given you this, there is truly nothing more I can do for you. We leave for the World Tree in 10 days, so prepare as best as you can before then.”

With his final words said, the White Dragon King waved his hand, causing Damien’s medallion to once again emit spatial light. Realizing what was happening, Damien quickly grabbed Ruyue before once again finding himself back within their residence.

‘Damn! What an interesting turn of events!’

Now that they were out of the White Dragon King’s vicinity, Damien felt his body relax. He didn’t even realize he was tense until this moment.

‘What an opportunity…’

Wasn’t it perfect? Almost all of the problems that were troubling him were directly solved.

‘Well, they’ll only be solved if I can properly get my hands on that purple fruit.’

But there was no way he’d allow someone else to get it. Peak genius? He had seen plenty of those before. He had beat even more. There was no way he would let one of them claim what’s his.

‘And it doesn’t just solve my problems, it also deals with the so-called World Tree.’

That was the second destination Damien and Ruyue wanted to visit while they were in the mountain range, and it happened to be where they were going now. It was all incredibly perfect, if one didn't consider the extremely high chance of death that the whole ordeal brought.

'10 days isn't a lot of time, but it also isn't too much time. I guess I should start by looking through that book that Senior White Dragon gave us.

It was at that moment that Damien felt a piercing pain in his side.

"Ah! What is it with you and pinching?!" He yelled as he was snapped out of his thoughts.

"Hmph!" Ruyue snorted.

Why was she mad? He was right, after all, she seemed to pinch him much more often than he'd expect to be pinched.

"Where do you think you're holding?" Ruyue said while glaring at him hatefully.

"Eh? What do you mean? I grabbed your waist didn't I?"

It was stupid. In his defense, Damien was still partially out of sorts and hadn't taken the time to look over at her yet. Also, Ruyue wasn't that much shorter than him, so looking into her eyes meant that the rest of her body wasn't in his direct periphery.

But when she mentioned it, Damien finally focused on his hand.

‘This...’

Was it coincidence or did he do it subconsciously because of his desire? His hand was filled with a soft and mellow feeling that was almost heavenly.

He was so tempted to squeeze at that moment, but seeing the look on Ruyue’s face, he knew that he wouldn’t end up in any good situation if he did so.

In his speechless state, Damien has frozen, not removing his hand from her breast. And with the strength of his grip, Ruyue couldn’t necessarily escape.

As time went on, her face became so red that it looked like she would almost explode. It was at that point that Damien finally moved his hand.

‘Holy shit! This kind of thing actually happens outside of anime!’

His thoughts were erratic. The moment prior, his excitement for the upcoming event was at its peak, but now, such thoughts had been completely thrown out of his head.

That feeling...! It was amazing. Ruyue was bigger than Rose in that area, and the way they felt naturally varied. While Rose’s fit perfectly in his hand, Ruyue’s had too much surface area for that. As for which one was better...

‘Wait wait wait, I can’t go comparing like that. As the saying goes, all titties matter.’ Damien thought seriously. If Rose ever found out he was comparing her breasts to another woman’s...

He shuddered just thinking about it.

Meanwhile, Ruyue was also in a state of shock. She already knew her feelings, and frankly, if he wanted to touch her like that, she wouldn’t necessarily mind, but it was simply too sudden...

‘I wouldn’t mind? What am I thinking?!’

She was startled by her own thoughts. Her embarrassment from the previous contact had made her thoughts run wild. Right, that was the reason.

She shot a glance at Damien, only to see him with a ‘savoring the aftertaste’ look on his face, which only made her blush more pronounced.

In this kind of atmosphere, it took the two a long time before they could rein in their individual thoughts and focus on the task at hand.

Damien sighed lightly. ‘Should I just...?’

He had known how he felt about her from even before they left the sect, but at that time, he wasn’t sure if she reciprocated his feelings.

Seeing how she was acting now, it was most likely the case. If such a situation happened back then, she probably would've reverted to being ice cold.

But now? Well, it was clear to see. With her pronounced blush and the way she kept stealing glances, he would be an idiot if he didn't notice her feelings. Even Rose showed fewer signs before he noticed.

But the problem was, he still wasn't sure how Rose felt about him having multiple women. And more than that, he still hadn't apologized to her for running away like that.

Before he thought about starting a second relationship, he needed to get his first one in order. Only after that would he even consider it.

But being honest, he couldn't bring himself to throw Ruyue away even if Rose refused. He was already trying to think of ways to appease her anger.

But now wasn't the time for such thoughts. He knew that, merely, the situation forced his thoughts to divert in such a direction.

Once again heaving a light sigh, Damien took out the 3000 Beast Record that the White Dragon King had given him.

'Now, let me see for myself the quality of geniuses here in this mountain range.'