

## Void 251

### Chapter 251 Sanctuary [3]

The Void Essence was soundless and ethereal. If it wasn't for the pitch black color and the slight suction force that wanted to consume everything, one wouldn't even notice its presence.

This essence was wrapped around the massive clump of space that used to be Damien's subspace and essentially consuming it.

There was no longer any semblance of structure. It was just a mass that seemed to have bloated and taken the place of many spatial layers that were desperately trying to mend themselves back to normal.

[The Primordial Undying Tree is expressing interest.]

[The Primordial Undying Tree allows the current situation to proceed.]

Damien saw flashes of blue light in front of his eyes that denoted system messages, but he was of no mind to pay attention to them. If he took his attention off the ongoing situation, he knew that all his efforts would collapse.

Not only would he have to rebuild his subspace from the ground up and provide it enough mana to grow to the proper size, but he'd also have to replicate the feats he was currently performing, which he doubted he could do.

But all of a sudden, the load seemed to become much more bearable. It was as if the space around him was actively helping him complete his task.

And this release of burden was actually extremely helpful..

Despite it being Damien's first time coming into contact with Void Essence, it felt so familiar and natural to manipulate that he did so without even batting an eye. His main problem was the suppression being enforced by the actual space around it.

After all, he was fighting against space itself, and on a broader scale, reality. It might've been a stretch to go so far as to say Damien had reached a level where he could manipulate reality, but with many factors coming together, he achieved a similar feat.

But it wasn't him doing it. Rather, it was the Void Essence that did all the actual work, while he just guided it and gave it instructions. His own power wasn't close to enough for anything near similar.

Luckily, this kind of process led to a drop in his mana drain, but unfortunately, his mental power was being drained exceedingly fast.

Damien was feeling incredibly fatigued to the point where he could barely stand anymore. He didn't pay attention to the passing of time nor did he pay attention to his own condition at all. If he did so, perhaps it would be the straw that led to his collapse.

Under his extreme control, the pitch black Void Essence melted into the subspace and infused itself within. Every inch of the area slowly became one with the void.

Now, the subspace no longer existed. As the bloated area of space was consumed, the area it once took up reduced from a massive city all the way down to the quarter it once was. And finally, it disappeared entirely.

The situation in the cave seemed to quiet down. The sparkling starlight of dimensional magic drifted through the air like fairies and space began to mend itself.

‘Did I succeed?’

Damien didn’t know. His mind was too tired from the aforementioned processes and his body was strained by the amount of mana he had drained and absorbed together.

‘If it wasn’t for the strengthening I received earlier from the magma, my body probably would’ve broken. Well, obviously such an overpowered absorption speed would have its own drawbacks.’

Damien’s body was drenched in sweat and his eyelids were already starting to become heavy. He didn’t know how much longer he could keep himself awake.

‘No...I have to check if I succeeded or not...it’s too important...’

He roughly bit his tongue, causing blood to flow in his mouth. Although in normal situations this would’ve helped him regain some clarity, it was impossible this time. He was so fatigued that he could barely even feel the pain from his actions.

[The Primordial Undying Tree expresses its surprise.]

‘Ah, fuck.’

He felt like his body and mind were disconnected, as if he was watching everything that was happening through a tv screen. And with that sensation engraved in his psyche, he collapsed to the floor and passed out.

[The Primordial Undying Tree smiles at you.]

‘Did I...succeed?’

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A week had quickly passed during Damien’s attempt to reform his subspace. Even he wasn’t aware that he had been focusing for so long.

Little Xue’er had long since woken up from her sleep, but not wanting to disturb him, she sat quietly in the corner and watched the glistening starlight of his dimensional magic.

To her, the only thing that was visible was a concentrating Damien and these little blue and black fairies in the cave. There was no way she could’ve seen the chaotic scene between the spatial layers.

Luckily enough, the food within Damien’s subspace was littered across the floor of the cave, so little Xue’er had plenty of sustenance. It would’ve been dangerous for her otherwise.

She spent her time playing with the beautiful atmosphere Damien had unintentionally created. If it wasn't for that, who knows what she would've done to alleviate her boredom?

One day, when she woke up from a good night's rest, she found that those little fairies were gone and that Damien was collapsed on the cave floor.

"Big brother?!" She rushed over to his body quickly, shaking him violently in hopes of a response.

"Big brother! Don't leave Xue'er alone! Big brother!"

She immediately went into a panic. This big brother that she had just met might not have been extremely close to her, but to Xue'er who had lost everything, he was now all she had.

To see him collapsed, to lose him, her little mind couldn't handle it. She began sobbing uncontrollably, the memories of her village's demise flooding into her mind.

"Big brother...don't go..." her voice was softer than a mosquito's, but it held a strong will. A will to never lose anyone again. She didn't want to suffer anymore, she didn't want to fall into despair.

So she couldn't let Damien die. She continued shaking him, doing her best to ignore the tears that were blurring her vision. Even though her body still wasn't fully recovered from its previous stress, she didn't care. She wouldn't eat or sleep until he woke up.

"Mm..."

She sat by Damien's side desperately shaking him for an entire day. By this point, it was more like a light pat than anything else due to her fatigue, but she didn't let up. And luckily, she received a response.

It wasn't him waking up like she hoped, he didn't even seem to be close to opening his eyes again. But that slight mutter she heard...it brought a light of hope back into her eyes.

"Big brother!"

Xue'er cried happily. She threw herself into the bosom of the sleeping Damien and cried once more. But this time, her tears were of joy.

He was alive. Even if he was asleep, at least he was alive. Realizing this, Xue'er's mind relaxed, sending her into a deep slumber on his chest.

Her little body would finally be getting the rest it needed after another day of struggling.

Chapter 252 Sanctuary [4]

Bright rays of sunlight shone through the concealed entrance of the cave. Although not much light was able to make it through, it was enough to illuminate the hazy atmosphere within.

Damien was lying on the cave floor, his body unmoving and his mind completely empty. Even if he wanted to formulate a thought, it was impossible.

3 days had passed since he passed out, and he had yet to wake up. The current problem wasn't such an easy thing to heal from with just his regeneration abilities.

But 3 days of sleep was ample time. His mental stress had time to relieve itself and his body was no longer under any strain.

“Mmm...”

Damiens eyes slowly fluttered open, revealing to him the scenery of the cave. The second his groggy mind cleared up, his upper body shot up into a sitting position.

“Xue’er!”

Damien felt terrible. He didn’t know how much time had passed, but it didn’t matter. He was clear on what kind of effect his collapse would’ve had on her unstable psyche.

Hurriedly glancing around the cave, he panicked. ‘Where is she?!’

“Mm...Big brother...don’t leave...”

A small mutter resounded through the area. When Damien looked down, he noticed little Xue’er sleeping peacefully in his lap..

‘Ah, shit.’

With a light sigh, he brushed her hair, injecting a gentle stream of mana into her body. A light smile surfaced on the sleeping little girl's face.

Damien wrinkled his brow as he looked at her. 'I need to get her to a bath.'

Although he didn't like it, he was nowhere close to civilization right now. The little girl had been caked in mud and dust when he saw her, and the amount only grew during their time living in the cave.

'Damn, I almost forgot what it's like living as a mortal.'

The constant need for baths and hygiene when mana couldn't take care of all those problems easily, looking back at it now, it seemed like a hassle.

Even when Damien first came out of the dungeon when he was caked in blood and grime, he could've easily cleansed himself with mana. The only reason he didn't was because he missed the feeling of fresh water on his skin.

And no doubt, Xue'er was probably feeling the same.

But he couldn't help it right now. Although his mana capacity was full again and he could very easily clean her, he still needed all his current mana.

His task wasn't even close to done yet, after all. And that task was for long-term benefit, not for a short-term solution.



Damien realized that he had a bright smile on his face. He didn't even notice it before, but he knew exactly why it was there.

He could feel a connection far more esoteric than the connections he had to the stars.

It was a connection that spanned past the real plane and into the ethereal, yet it was so close at hand that he felt no difficulty manipulating it.

‘Success!’

This was the goal he was hoping for. No matter how he untethered the subspace from the surrounding three dimensions, he never touched the intrinsic connection it had to his being.

It was almost a like part of him.

His whole plan banked on this intrinsic connection. If he couldn't feel it, he failed. But since he could, he knew it was time to move on to the next step.

The void was a concept that Damien had no information on. It was something so far away that even though he could manipulate its essence, he knew he wouldn't be able to actually apply it to much.

He couldn't even naturally call it forth. He didn't have a method besides opening another crack in reality, but how much work had it taken him to create the one he just did?

‘But that’s good for me. Rather than trying to immediately gain control over such a high-tier essence, I can practice with the diluted version within me before moving on to the greater ones.’

‘Looks like I have yet another thing or study.’

Despite the increase in work, Damien was extremely happy. After all, besides the success in his experiment, he also became slightly closer to his Void Physique.

Yet another function was unlocked to him. Yet another aspect of the physique he had most likely possessed since birth had been revealed.

And this particular function, the connection to the void itself that he had only had the opportunity of feeling after creating a small crack in reality, seemed to be a true main function of the physique.

‘Damn, how long would it have taken me to figure it out if I had taken things slowly like I’ve been doing? How much more powerful would I have needed to get before I could tear open a crack in reality and form a connection to the void?’

He was extremely lucky this time. But this was naturally still a matter to be celebrated.

But that all came later. The reason he had infused his subspace with Void Essence and changed its fine properties was because nothing could survive in the void.

Anything sent there would be consumed and devoured. This was a base concept that even translated into an ability of his physique. To affirm that his subspace could survive without being subjected to such devouring, he essentially made it part of the void.

It could be called a trick more than anything. The void itself would recognize his subspace as a part of it and ignore the pocket of space that was being kept within it.

The problem that arose now was, what was the next step.

Right now, his subspace was just that. Sure, it became something that nobody would be able to access besides him, regardless of their strength, but that was it.

The next step was to turn it into a livable environment.

There was an interesting thing Damien learned about the void by interacting with its essence for an entire week without pause.

Void Essence, while being an embodiment of nothingness, was also an embodiment of everything.

Damien's devour ability was an extremely diluted version of its power. There was a reason he could perfectly incorporate the traits of the things he devoured. There was a reason the ability was so optimized.

The void, the Void Essence within it, shared this ability but to a greater scale. It wasn't limited to devouring mere beasts or living things. It wasn't even limited to devouring matter. Such a thing was beneath it.

The void could devour laws, it could devour the fabric of the universe itself. That was the reason why it was so esoteric that not a single person could grasp a method to use it.

But Damien's physique was exactly this method.

Although he couldn't abuse it or even properly control it, giving it suggestions wasn't a problem. If he wanted to incorporate the properties of life and mana within his subspace, it was entirely possible.

Elements weren't nearly enough for the current task. But laws, laws would work perfectly. At Damien's command, the laws within the Void slowly infused into the subspace that had been incorporated into it.

'What an awkward feeling.' Damien thought inwardly. Although he could understand what was happening, he couldn't actually see or feel it. It was strange, as if he was reading about the events that transpired instead of actually directing and being a part of them.

But regardless of the strange feeling, and regardless of his limited understanding of what he was actually doing, the void itself seemed to help him.

It read his mind and understood his intentions. It acted like it had sentience of its own, but that wasn't too surprising to him since his Void Physique had also shown such signs before.

Soon enough, Damien felt a flood of different essences that he had never felt before entering and infusing into his subspace.

'Life, death, space, time, creation, destruction, these are all the elements I saw in my system window back then!'

They were the laws that the system had told him created the universe. And now, they were becoming a part of his subspace.

‘Damn! If I could gain authority over this power, would I be able to learn all of these? Would I be able to actually feel them instead of just being told that they are what is being infused into by subspace? Would I be able to actively control this kind of process?’

The things that were happening right now were by his design, but out of his control. It was frustrating and enlightening at the same time, making Damien’s eyes burn with motivation.

As the process continued, the 5 elements and many other essences were added to his subspace. The incorporeal space within began to transform. Half of it became land, the other half became skies. There were even pools of water that might one day become oceans.

Damien could only watch and admire the majesty of it all. The Void Essence, no, the void itself had turned his original idea into something much grander.

He wasn’t expecting there to be true land or skies. How could he predict that at all? He only expected a massive construct like Kurt’s subspace, which was a simple library and study.

But not even in his wildest dreams would he have imagined the current scene.

Damien was currently the only person who could witness such a thing.

It was the birth of a world outside of reality.

Within Damien's mindspace, there was a mental map of what he assumed was his subspace. This was the only way he could understand the changes going on within it.

After all, it currently resided in the void, and regardless of whether he had discovered his mysterious connection with it or not, he still had no way of controlling or even entering it.

By this point, he had already been watching the activities in the void for many weeks. Even from the beginning, when it began to inject his subspace with its essence, he had lost control over the process.

So there was no longer anything he could do besides watch. And in this time, he had learned a few things.

For one, the level of Void Essence that was taking part in the reconstruction of his subspace was far above the level of essence that had leaked from the crack of reality.

If it wasn't for the mental map that had formed in his mind when the void took control over the creation process, he wouldn't have even realized anything was changing.

If he were to be attacked by that level of void essence, he wouldn't even be able to tell how he died. No, perhaps his existence itself would be erased from the records of the universe.

Even the low-level Void Essence he had seen earlier already far outstripped the essence of his own devour skill, making him realize just how far he was from the goal he had just recently set.

If he had to quantify it, he most likely hadn't even grasped a single percent of the void's power..

The second thing he noticed was that, contrary to his earlier conjectures, the subspace was nowhere close to becoming a true world.

It didn't have a World Core, which he had long since known was the main essence of a world, and it also didn't have the other functioning structures of one either.

Even though the essence of the 5 elements as well as the other creation forces had already entered and infused into his subspace, he could instinctually feel that they were in a sort of dormant state.

For now, it would be an unchanging area, similar to the library and study that Kurt had created, but much more complex.

There would be no changes in weather, he didn't even know if there would be day and night. But in the end, this didn't matter.

His goal had been achieved a long time ago, and as of now, he was just reaping the extra benefit that came with it.

The process of forming the new structure of the subspace didn't seem like it would be a short one at all. Even after a month passed, it didn't look complete. But Damien could tell. It was almost there.

During this month, since he had nothing better to do while he waited, he spent plenty of quality time with little Xue'er in a bid to appease her after scaring her by collapsing.

The little girl had even spent a few days giving him the silent treatment before he was able to crack her shell again, making him endlessly wear a wry smile.

While he wasn't playing around with Xue'er, he would leave the cave they had made into their home and hunt the various beasts that lived in the jungle they were currently in.

These beasts were never too strong, with the strongest being at the early stages of 3rd class, but they still somewhat helped in nourishing his star. The dullness of the silver was slowly becoming brighter with every passing day.

But there was no way Damien would spend too much time on these weak beasts. His main priority during the month was to learn more about the abominations he had met and how they were connected to the Nox.

As for the results of his search, he could only say that it wasn't a disappointment, though it wasn't anything special either.

For the first week and a half, he had stayed within a 500-kilometer radius of the cave, since he didn't want to leave little Xue'er alone for too long. 500 Kilometers, while being a massive distance, wasn't actually that far for him anymore.

Even with his teleportation limited as it was, he could traverse in a straight line for 500 kilometers in a few hours, half a day at most.

But within that 500-kilometer radius, he still hadn't run into more humans. It wasn't that there was no civilization, it was just that all signs of villages or towns he found were nothing more than dilapidated ruins.



The only sign that there were people living in them at some point was the corpses that littered the ground. But even these seemed too few in numbers.

It was at that point when Damien realized why little Xue'er's parents had told her to kill herself before being bit by those abominations.

They were something similar to zombies. Even if it wasn't a high chance, there was still a chance that the corpse of someone they consumed would become just like them.

It was hard to stay unperturbed in the face of such genocide, but Damien did his best to keep his thoughts clear.

'With this much wide-scale activity in the area, it's likely that there's a base of them somewhere near.'

With that thought, he spent the rest of the month searching for said base. But even until this point, his search had come up empty.

Thinking about the results, Damien sighed to himself. 'Such a harsh limiter on teleportation is really troublesome.'

His teleportation was directly linked to the spatial layers, and the spatial layers made up space itself. Naturally, his connection to these layers had been suppressed as well.

‘If only it was like it was back then, things would be so much easier.’

The second he separated his subspace from reality, the spatial suppression had reinstated itself. It was as if the world was telling him that it would only help him that much.

Without his connection to the spatial layers, the amount of detail he could make out when he spread his awareness to the limit had decreased significantly. And since he had to shorten his range to get a clearer picture, his search was taking much longer than it should have.

Suddenly, Damien felt like a bomb exploded in his mind. It wasn’t a revelation of any sort of enlightenment. In fact, it had abruptly paused his thought process in such a way that he almost failed to regain his bearings.

But when he did, his eyes flashed with incomparable excitement.

“Hahaha! Finally! After a whole month, it’s finally done!”

Wanting to express his joy, he picked up little Xue’er, who was watching him curiously from the side, and lifted her into the air, spinning in circles before hugging her tightly.

The little girl’s bell-like laughter rang out in the cave, almost causing the surroundings to genuinely illuminate. The youthful vigor in little Xue’er’s eyes had slowly begun to show itself once more

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“Big brother, what happened? Did you find good food!” She asked innocently. The only time she had seen this new big brother of hers smile so widely was when he was eating amazing meat.

But Damien only shook his head with a smile. “Little Xue, didn’t your big brother tell you he was working on something great? What do you think, isn’t it about time we left this dull little cave for a while?”

Little Xue’er’s eyes brightened at the prospect. She was truly becoming too bored with the monotony of the surrounding rock walls. Nodding excitedly, she looked at Damien with anticipation.

“Mm!”

Damien laughed once more. “Very well! Then, little Xue, this big brother will show you why he is the most powerful man in the universe!”

The second his words ended, the two people were covered in a flash of formless light before vanishing from the spot where they once stood.

Chapter 254 Sanctuary [6]

In an unknown location, there was a realm filled with endless blackness. No light or sound permeated its reach, and not even a single movement disrupted the calm and somber air within it.

“Haa...”

All of a sudden, an aged sigh rang out. The sigh was filled with a weariness of countless years, and the emotions it carried seemed to resonate with the blackness of the atmosphere, making it even more somber.

The winds lightly whistled by as the owner of the aged voice directed its eyes to the distance, seemingly able to pierce the veil of the blackness around it.

“After so many years, has the time finally come again? However, even if it has come, was there ever a real point?”

The voice rumbled forth, carrying vast power that contradicted its tired tone.

“To be able to see everything but to possess no power to interfere, what is the point of living like this? But, no matter how much I question myself, I’m not left with much of a choice, am I?”

The old voice mocked its own powerlessness.

“My race...no, they cannot be called as such anymore. But they are still my people. I swear, if any harm comes to them, I’ll tear you to shreds. Even if I have to burn my life away to do so, I swear I will not hesitate.”

The aimless voice suddenly gained direction. It spoke into the blackness with a domineering ferocity that it didn’t hold even a single second ago.

But the one the voice was seemingly addressing didn’t seem to be in a hurry to respond.

But when it did, the blackness shook. A harrowing malevolence oozed from its every word, causing streaks of crimson light to surface in the blackness. .

“Kikikiki...Old Fool, over the countless millennia that we have spent together in this damned place, this must be the most I’ve ever heard you talk. What, did you find someone promising again?”

“You really should’ve learned how to keep your thoughts in check by now. Ahh, what a shame. Yet another genius with boundless destiny will fall within your realm. And all while you can only sit and watch it happen. Isn’t it such a great feeling? I, for one, revel in seeing the look on your face whenever it happens.”

“Damn thing. If you plan to mock me, at least say something that will actually do damage. By this point, you should already understand that you cannot faze me with such petty words. As for my emotions, as long as we are within this despicable blackness they are laid bare to you. What’s the point of trying to hide them?” The aged voice responded. But regardless of his words, a trace of anger could faintly be heard in his tone.

“How many tens of thousands of years had it been since we’ve been stuck in this never-ending stalemate? How many worlds have we reached and subsequently left during that time? Even if you prohibit me from looking into the outside world, I’ll never mistake the flavor of foreign delicacies. You know you can’t hide it from me.”

“Hiding it or not, none of it matters. So long as you are stuck here with me, there is not much you can do. So sit patiently and watch. One day someone will arrive who can survive your nonsense and reach this point once and for all.

“The same way you have left your troops there, I have left my main body. Even if you can stop the many, the few that can survive will inevitably become stronger. And when they do, they will grow into a force that will exterminate your kind.”

“Kikiki, an Old Fool like you really loves to talk big. But, can’t you feel it? Can’t you see it? You don’t have much longer, while I am constantly encroaching on your power. Old Fool, this never-ending stalemate of ours will end much sooner than you think.”

The aged voice sighed, not bothering to respond to the latter’s provocation any longer. His reality-piercing gaze once again drifted to the sight he was previously watching.

‘A storm is on the horizon, and I doubt whether or not my people can make it out alive. Boy, I do not know how you came in contact with that power, but since you did, it means you are someone I can put my hopes in. Survive the trials ahead of you, forge your own path, and perhaps, I can truly entrust you with my will.’

The old voice’s mana raged for a mere instant, causing the blackness to be filled with white and green light. And after that, everything once again became still.

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When Damien and little Xue reappeared, the scenery they witnessed was nothing even close to the dreariness of the cave they stayed in.

Whoosh!

A light wind brushed passed their faces. Tall grasses that covered little Xue’s whole lower body brushed against their skin. In the distance, they could see a single towering mountain that made the surrounding flat plain a little less bland.

The sky was clear and bright, with no clouds in sight. And even though it was lit as if there was a sun, they couldn't find one no matter how hard they looked.

Little Xue's eyes shined like stars as she saw the scene in front of her.

Damien smiled. "Little Xue, what do you think? This is where you'll be living from now on. There are no bad monsters or people, and Big brother can come see you whenever you want. This entire place is your own personal playground."

"Wooooaaah!!!"

An excited shriek left little Xue's mouth. She hurriedly jumped out of Damien's arms and began freely running through the tall grass.

"Hehehe!"

The bell-like and youthful giggles rang out through the surroundings once again, brightening the sky and causing the elements to sing in joy.

Damien couldn't stop the bright smile that decorated his face. Seeing her like this made him feel that his decision to forge forward on this path was entirely worth it. Even disregarding the countless future benefits, this much was enough.

Splash!

The sound of water splashing reached Damien's ears, causing him to turn in that direction. As it turned out, little Xue had directly dove into one of the semi-shallow lakes that decorated the flat plain.

"Ah! You only have one set of clothes!" Damien exclaimed as he remembered. But seeing how the little girl didn't even seem to register his words, he could only massage his forehead.

'What am I supposed to do? Use sunflames as a hair dryer?'

He flashed forward, reaching the banks of the lake in an instant. 'Well, whatever. The clothes problem is pretty easy to solve. As long as she's happy, it's fine.'

Coating himself in mana so he didn't get wet, Damien also entered the lake and swam towards little Xue. When he got there, he immediately moved his hands to her face and began cleaning it.

"Ah! Ah! Stop it tickles!" Little Xue exclaimed.

"Who told you to be so dirty? Sit patiently and let big brother clean you up." Damien chimed.

It seemed she didn't even realize how dirty she was until she heard Damien's words. At that point, she stopped making a fuss and let him take care of her.

Damien gently cleaned her face with the clear water of the lake before moving on to her hair, gently infusing mana into the lake water to help untangle the knots she had built up much quicker.



As for the rest, Damien didn't need to do any work since she was already submerged in water. He simply infused mana into it once again to allow the caked mud and dirt on her skin to fall off much easier. Even her dress was becoming cleaner by the second.

Little Xue patiently waited with her eyes closed, a light smile decorating her face. The warmth she was feeling from being taken care of like this, it was something she would do everything she could to savor. Luckily for her, the water on her face concealed the happy tears that were falling from her eyes.

When Damien was finished with her hair, he moved in front of her to look at his handiwork.

Xue's face was cute enough to make any random passerby want to smother her with love. Her big green eyes shone with a light of innocence that was slightly tainted by the maturity that she was forced to gain in recent times. Her black hair was long and silky, like a glistening midnight waterfall that cascaded down to her waist.

"Mm. Little Xue is the prettiest in the world. As expected of my little sister." Damien said matter of factly.

Xue smiled brightly at his words, her innocent giggles once again ringing through the surroundings as she went back to playing in the water.

Seeing this, Damien exited the lake and fell into thought. He didn't know if he was ready to have a child enter his life, especially with the kind of jumping into danger at all times lifestyle he lived, but he also knew that this was a responsibility he had brought upon himself the second he decided to save her life.

This little girl was filled with trauma. Her little mind was only stable because she had him as a pillar of support now. If he decided to leave her, he knew that she would break. He could see the attachment she had gained to him in the past month

No, even in the first week she had become attached enough to starve herself when she noticed he was collapsed. If he didn't take responsibility, he'd be worse than a devil.

So, he earnestly decided to be a big brother that she could rely on. He decided that he'd make sure she would live a stable and happy life without worries. This was the decision he made from the beginning.

‘But...it’s really not that bad.’

Having a little sibling like Xue’er brought a different kind of joy into his life. It was a wholesomeness that seemed to wash away his stress simply by being in her presence.

Splash!

Another splash of water appeared, this time landing on Damien and drenching him, who was still in thought.

Looking over, he saw little Xue’er smiling at him with a mischievous look in her eyes. Putting away his thoughts, a grin appeared on his face.

“Ah! You traitor! You dare to splash your Big brother?!” He yelled in mock anger.

“I dare! I dare! Big brother can’t catch me!” Xue’er responded with a giggle.

Damien grinned. His body flashed forward, cannonballing into the lake.

“Ah!”

The water went everywhere, causing little Xue’er to become even more soaked.

“Watch how Big brother teaches you a lesson! Didn’t you know? If your big brother claims to be second in splashing battles, then nobody would dare to claim they’re first!”

With a domineering declaration, Damien dove towards little Xue’er. Splashes of water and joyful laughter filled the subspace. It was like a paradise where no problems in the world could reach.

Damien smiled at the thought. Yes, it was a paradise. The names “subspace” or “inventory” no longer fit this place.

‘That’s right. From now on, this is my personal Sanctuary.’

Chapter 255 Base [1]

Time passed quickly within the Primordial Undying Realm and competition became fiercer with every passing day.

Slaughters were taking place everywhere, and while most of the victims were beasts, the contestants themselves weren't safe either.

It was a strange thing that happened when there was an entire year for the competition to rage on. People began to gravitate towards each other, unable to fend for themselves without a safety net to catch them when they needed it.

Like this, after 3 months passed in the secret realm, there were already a few factions that had been formed.

The first, which wasn't much of a surprise, was the Fire Phoenix Faction. It was a faction of people, mostly women, who gathered under Feng Qing'er's banner. Although they didn't do much to help each other hunt most of the time, they had a strict policy that prevented infighting, which gave them comfort and security.

The location of Feng Qing'er's faction was actually a relatively bustling city. Unlike Damien, she had managed to reach a far enough location where the genocide hadn't spread yet.

At first, the locals had been wary, rightfully so with all the rumors that had been flying around recently, but as time passed, they had already wholly accepted the faction's presence.

After all, most of these citizens were mere mortals. That was the problem that led to the genocide where Damien was located.

In a regular environment, mortals would usually be able to hunt weaker beasts to gain power before moving on. But in this realm, they didn't have that option. 2nd class beings were everywhere, making it hell to leave a city..

As Feng Qing'er strolled through the city, she quietly listened to the various conversations taking place between the locals.

"I heard that yet another city fell yesterday."

"Which one was it this time?"

"It was Relia."

"Relia?! That's only a few kilometers to the south!"

"I know. The plague must be reaching us soon. Luckily, we have acquired the protection of some very powerful people."

"Right, but they aren't locals. Are we sure they won't abandon us when things get rough?"

"Trust me, I had the same doubt when they first came. But they have been very diligent in safekeeping the city. Didn't you find it odd? Not a single beast tide has hit us since they came."

"Eh? You're right! How is that possible? Even when all the able-bodied people in the city fight together, we can only barely stave off the beast tide with the barrier left by the ancestors."

"Right, the barrier used to be our only hope. But now, we can count on their protection."

The barrier they spoke about was one of the main reasons Feng Qing'er chose this city as her base. In fact, it wasn't even the only barrier she had seen.

Every major city she had passed had a similar barrier, but from her observations, their strength increased as one moved further into the secret realm.

It was strange. The only people here were mortals, yet their ancestors had been powerful enough to create barriers that could withstand the attacks of 3rd class beings? How was that possible?

But Feng Qing'er hadn't been able to get a proper answer about this. At most, the stories these people told about their ancestors were like those of legends. The amount of factual information within them seemed to be lacking.

'However, I don't think these barriers were meant for beasts.'

Feng Qing'er remembered the scene she saw 3 months ago when she first entered the secret realm. A scene of carnage where even the corpses left behind were desecrated. Every time that image popped into her mind, she clenched her fists in anger.

'I still have yet to find out the cause of that scene, but it must be related to the plague they were talking about. In that case, it'll be reaching our city soon.'

Feng Qing'er furrowed her brows. At first, she thought this secret realm trial would be a piece of cake, but it was turning out to be anything but.

Even with all the killing she had done so far, the star on her forehead was still a shining golden color. It was better than what everyone else in the city had, but it wasn't enough for her.

'How would Luna deal with this situation? Ah, I miss having her with me.'

Lunaria Snow was the brain while she was the brawn. That's how they had always been, and that's how they had maintained their position at the top of the ranking so easily.

But now, she was alone to do both jobs herself. She also had plenty of people counting on her leadership.

'But at least this is good practice. When mother passes down the Matriarch position to me, it'll be much worse than just this much.'

Her thoughts drifted to the outside world. Unlike Damien, she wasn't aware of the time dilation. She wondered what would have changed once many years passed and they finally exited this realm.

Shaking off her thoughts, she entered the building where her faction headquarters were.

'I don't want to stay in the dark any longer. Let me see for myself what the source of this plague is.'

As if waiting for her thoughts to reach this point, the thundering rings of a bell sounded throughout the city.

Clang! Clang!

Feng Qing'er's eyes darted in that direction. The first thing she saw was the sheer panic on the faces of the locals.

They were cowering, literally cowering in the middle of the streets, completely unable to move. Even when it was time for a beast tide, this specific bell was never rung.

No, this bell had a special meaning. They had passed off this meaning as a mere folktale as time passed with no strange action taking place, but now that it was being rung, a deeply ingrained fear surfaced in their hearts.

“It's them! They're here! We're all doomed!”

“The Devil has finally sent his armies. Our city will become one of the many that have fallen to his hands.”

Feng Qing'er ignored the commotion and flew into the air, scanning the plains outside of the city to find the source of the commotion.

And it didn't take her long at all.

From every side of the city, a rolling black mass was approaching. There were hundreds, no, thousands of beings slowly charging towards their location.

‘What are those?’



Feng Qing'er injected mana into her eyes. A flame seemed to light inside her pupils as her vision expanded far past what she could usually see.

'Those are...wait!'

The abominations approaching the village looked humanoid, but they were anything but human. Their sizes and shapes differed, but their dull black eyes projected a bloodthirst that she could feel even from a distance.

At the back of the tide were 4 massive elephantine beasts that seemed to be carrying something similar to a palanquin. The mana emanating from the beings within the closed drapes of said palanquins was obviously much greater than that of any singular being within the tide.

'That must be where the boss of these guys are. But what are they?'

Feng Qing'er's attention soon left the palanquins to focus on something else. It was something familiar to her. The blackness of the tide didn't just come from their appearances. No, it was like a coat of mana that wanted to bring darkness onto everything.

This dark and inky mana, she had seen it once before. It was the exact same mana that was corroding and destroying the corpses of those in the very first village she had found in this realm.

Chapter 256 Base[2]

It had been 2 months since the secret realm opening, and to be honest, Damien wasn't very happy with his progress. But overall, he didn't mind it much.

After all, most of the time during these 3 months had been spent in the Sanctuary with little Xue'er. He couldn't just let her sleep in the grass without any shelter.

And so, he had taken it upon himself to build her a house.

Well, treehouse was a more apt name.

Damien couldn't necessarily call himself good at woodworking or craftsmanship, but he at least had basic knowledge. Even he as a kid had built himself a treehouse. It was only a difference in scale that he was working on now.

Due to his lack of skill, the construction process took an entire month to finish. But at the end of the month, there was a truly fine treehouse built at the side of the lake little Xue'er had found last time.

Damien looked at his craftsmanship with pride. 'Not too bad, if I do say so myself.'

It was a simple design, but the size was truly big. If he wanted, he could probably fit another 10 or 20 kids in this same treehouse without a problem.

And in case little Xue'er got bored, he also added a small playground on the side, equipped with swings, a slide, and many other novelties that kids from earth enjoyed.

'Mm, if I can get any better at this construction stuff, I'll build her a whole amusement park. Let's see how she thanks her Big brother at that time.'

Damien was still holding a slight grudge. This little girl seemed to get bolder by the day, and apparently she had made teasing him her new hobby. Whenever he failed during the past month of construction, he'd receive an earful from her.

But, he let it slide. Kids would be kids after all, and for her to be opening up so much, he could only be thankful that her trauma was being buried. .

But soon, Damien's expression hardened. 'With all the preparations for little Xue'er done, I think it's about time I attack.'

A few days ago, while he was out hunting for their food, he had come across a suspicious area. It was similar to his own cave, an extremely concealed system that he wouldn't have noticed if not for his eyes.

But the reason he was suspicious of it was naturally due to the inky black mana that slightly leaked from it. A mana that he was all too familiar with.

'I'm embarrassed that it took me so long to find it. Seriously, even though it was hidden quite well, it was still much closer than expected.'

He had started his search at the edges of the 500-kilometer radius and worked his way inward. If it wasn't for this, he probably would've found the base location a month ago easily.

But none of this mattered. Damien looked towards the treehouse where little Xue'er was staying and sighed.

"I know you can hear me! Big brother has to go out for a while, okay?"

He was met with silence.

Sighing lightly, he climbed up to the treehouse and knocked on the door. "Hello? Is anyone there?"

"No, nobody is here. You should stay and wait for the owner to come back." A small voice responded from within.

"Ah, but if the owner isn't here, then I can only leave and come back later. Sorry for the intrusion!" Damien knocked on the wood next to him at varying degrees of strength, making it sound like he had walked down the staircase connecting to the door.

Immediately, a rush of footsteps came from inside before the door was pulled open

"You tricked me!" Xue'er said with a pout when she noticed Damien standing in front of her.

But Damien only grinned. Walking into the treehouse, he picked up little Xue'er and gave her a soft hug

"Big brother has to go this time. You also know it's important." He said softly.

"Mm. But Xue'er doesn't want Big brother to get hurt. Big brother is going to meet the bad ghosts today, right?" Xue'er responded, hugging him tightly.

Damien sighed. As he thought, this little girl was far too perceptive for her own good. Perhaps from the beginning she knew that he was trying to hunt those Nox beings.

“That’s right. Big brother is going to hunt the bad ghosts. But didn’t you see when we first met? Those evil ghosts can’t even touch a hair on your big brother’s head.”

Xue’er nodded, but she didn’t leave his embrace. In fact, she embraced him tighter. “Big brother has to be safe. If big brother doesn’t come back, Xue’er will also go to where big brother is to find him.”

Damien gave a soft smile in response. “Mm, if big brother is in trouble, then of course little Xue needs to come save the day. Xue is a superhero after all!”

After spending a few more minutes coaxing the little girl, Damien finally exited the Sanctuary.

The process of exiting and entering was so simple that it made Damien marvel. He simply needed to think it, and he’d appear where he wanted to be. And the mana cost was so negligible that he would’ve been able to cover it even before he fell into the dungeon and mutated.

When he appeared in the outside world, he was in the exact same place that he entered the Sanctuary from, the location directly outside of where he found the base earlier.

Without wasting any time, he charged in. He wasn’t lying when he told little Xue’er that he’d be back soon. In fact, he had no fear or wariness at all. He already knew that this area was relatively weak.

Most likely, there wouldn't even be abominations above 2nd class here. The only reason he was going to this base instead of finding a more worthy one was so he could maybe understand more about what exactly the creatures were.

Entering the cave, he found that it actually wasn't a complicated structure at all.

'Now that I'm seeing it, it's pathetic to even call it a base.'

It was simply a massive cave with thousands of those abominations littered across the floor standing as if they were in stasis. At the end of the cave, there was a single house that seemed to be the location of their boss.

Damien grinned. 'Large-scale destruction is my forte, and with these weak enemies, I don't even need to try that hard. Actually, isn't this the perfect time to test that move?'

Damien proudly walked into the open, blazing his aura for all to see. Immediately, those abominations left their stasis and directed their attention at him.

"Huuu..."

"Huumaan..."

Countless groans filled the cave in a cacophony of sound. The abominations immediately began running towards Damien in a frenzied state, making one wonder if they were really standing so still only a moment ago.

‘It’s human aura that attracts them, huh. It seems the beasts in the area don’t matter much to them.’

Seeing the massive wave of black that was charging towards him, Damien grinned.

To be honest, he had been wanting to do this for a long time. It was something he had wanted to realize ever since he was in the dungeon.

Specifically, when he cleared the 40th floor. Back then, his attacks and even his personality were mainly based on anime he had watched on earth. By now, he no longer needed to use such coping mechanisms.

But still, the feeling of wanting to emulate the signature move of a certain fire-breathing dragon slayer had stuck with him ever since he acquired dragon’s breath.

When he got his hands on the sunflames, this feeling only became more pronounced. But, his body simply couldn’t handle it.

The only flames he had in his arsenal were so hot that if he tried to incorporate them into Bai dragon’s breath, he’d quite literally melt his throat from the inside out and kill himself.

But things were different now. The tempering he had received from the magma earlier had specifically focused mainly on his evolved areas. Now, if he really wanted to...

Damien’s throat expanded as flames from the sun manifested within it. These flames were then coated in spatial mana before expanding violently.

Damien took a deep breath, deeper than any breath he had taken before. His lungs expanded, his cheeks puffed out, and he was finally able to execute a certain attack that he loved so much.

“ROOOAAAAR!”

A massive roar left his mouth, causing a flamethrower-like beam of reddish-orange to be exhaled. The sea of flames soon went to cover the entire cave setting even the air ablaze.

The massive hoard of abominations was easily swallowed by this flame. Even as he continued roaring, Damien’s eyes were smiling wide.

‘Fire dragon roar!’

Finding novelty in the situation, he continued spewing flames even after he felt that the horde was probably dead already.

And even when he finally finished roaring, the flames in the atmosphere continued to blaze.

There were no cries of anguish or even sounds or smell of death. It was all swallowed by the sunflames that had been incorporated into his dragon’s breath.

By the time the flames died down, all that was left was an empty and charred cave. Even the house at the end of the cave had been burnt to ashes.



But when Damien's gaze landed on the location where that house once stood, he found something that actually ended up piquing his interest.

It was the half-burned body of a man. His features were humanoid just like the abomination, but his eyes held a myriad of emotions.

Rage, confusion, panic.

It was obvious that this Nox being was much different from the rest that he had seen so far.

Chapter 257 Base [3]

Looking at the man who was desperately attempting to crawl away, Damien's eyes shone with a light of curiosity. In the next instant, he had already arrived in front of him.

"D-don't come closer!" The man screeched in terror.

He had been living in leisure, taking care of his post as he had been ordered to before he was suddenly engulfed in a sea of night inextinguishable flames. If he hadn't hastily erected a barrier at the last second, he didn't doubt he would be dead by now.

"Oh? You can actually speak cohesively, huh. I somewhat expected it, but it's still good to know." Damien commented. He had no sympathy for this man at all.

The man continued trying to crawl back, but his house was already at the bad end of the cave. It didn't take long for his body to hit the wall. Shivers ran down his spine as he realized there was really no escaping the monster in front of him.

“P-please! I’ll tell you anything if you let me live!”

“Wow, I didn’t even have to do the torturing before you gave up. That certainly makes things easier.” Damien said, his shoulders slightly relaxing as if he had let go of some tension.

The man smiled inwardly. As he thought, a brat like the one in front of him wouldn’t be experienced enough in the real world. .

The man’s burnt arm slumped to the floor as if he had lost strength, but in reality, he was reaching towards his pocket. Even if he died here, he needed to inform the others that he had been compromised.

As if not noticing the man’s movements, Damien stared into his eyes and began questioning him. “So? Let’s start with the simple stuff. Who do you work for? What is your purpose? What are those things I just killed?”

The man seemed to hesitate slightly before his eyes dimmed. Answers started rolling out of his mouth. “I-I can’t say who I work for. I really don’t know. They simply tell me what to do, and I follow. My body moves on its own. Even my purpose is something I don’t know. The only thing I know is that they want me to kill every human I see.

“As for those, they are simply monsters we have subdued and corrupted, nothing more. I swear this is the truth.”

The man’s hand quickly reached his pocket. While he continued spouting nonsense, he retrieved a silver bell and tried to clamp his hand down on it. However...

“Eh?”

Regardless of what he tried, his hand wouldn't move as he commanded it to. When he darted his eyes towards his right side, he saw a fine black line on the area connecting his shoulder to the rest of his body.

Thump.

His arm cleanly fell off, causing black blood to spurt out of his shoulder.

“Ahhh!”

The man screamed on instinct, but there was no pain. Perhaps the fact that he couldn't feel what had happened even now was even more terrifying than if he had actually felt the pain.

“Hahaha! I didn't think you would actually be stupid enough to pull something, but I guess for those assholes to assign you to a post so far out in this realm, you couldn't have actually been someone worth fostering.”

Damien grinned. This place was like the backwoods of the secret realm, where even the barriers that Feng Qing'er had found weren't present. There was no way they'd send anyone of note to facilitate this place.

But that didn't mean the man in front of him was entirely useless. Damien looked towards the man's pocket, slashing his arm and causing the man's entire leg to be severed from his body and fly into Damien's grasp.

Quickly using lightning to sear the wound shut so the man didn't bleed out, Damien took a silver bell out of the pocket of the severed leg and fiddled with it curiously.

"This is what you were banking your hopes on? I assume it's some sort of communication device? No, it'd be better for me if there was a tracker installed as well."

The man shivered slightly at Damien's words.

"No way? There's actually a tracker? What would you guys even need a tracker for? The only function it'd have is to help your enemies."

Although Damien had been taking the whole situation lightly, it wasn't the same for the man in front of him. Not only his arm, but even his leg had been completely severed. Not to mention the searing lightning that burned his wounds shut.

The man was doing everything he could to stop himself from convulsing from the pain. His will had already been shattered the second Damien took the plaque from him. This time, he was truly acting so that he could maybe have a chance to live.

"P-please spare my life, senior...I will tell you everything. There is indeed a tracking device that lets us locate each other within the plaque. The reason being that we need it when we coordinate our armies for larger excursions.

“As for your previous questions, I truly don’t know the identities of those in charge. I only know that they want human blood to be spilled unto the lands. That is the command I received. Those creatures you killed are simply inferior versions of us. They hold no real value or sentience.”

Damien nodded. Pretty much everything he said was within his expectations. The only thing he was wondering about was the command the man had received.

‘To spill human blood unto the lands...although I don’t put the Nox above random slaughter like that, it doesn’t strike me as their motive this time. If it was, then there’d be no need for structure within the ranks of those they send.’

If the Nox just wanted slaughter, they could just send a few of these 3rd class beings in every direction and easily achieve their goals. There was no reason to even create or use these inferior abominations.

‘The 3rd classes never moved. There was simply no need for them to. But there must be a purpose for their presence.’

Damien looked at the silver plaque in his hand. This would most likely be his best bet at answers. As for the man in front of him, he had become entirely useless.

Suddenly, Damien thought of a point. “Oi, what happens if I inject untainted mana into this?”

He had seen them before, artifacts that adhered to certain mana signatures. He didn’t want to risk having all his enemies flee or become aware of his interference due to a simple mistake.

The man's eyes widened for a second before he tried to rein in his expressions, but he had realized it was already too late. Sighing, he ended up bitterly answering Damien's question again.

"The plaque will alert others that I have been compromised. The only way to truly use it is by injecting our holy mana into it."

The only saving grace he had was that if Damien needed his mana to use the plaque, his life was guaranteed. And as long as he lived, nothing else mattered.

But unlike what he thought, Damien simply nodded before slashing his arm out again. Before the man could even process what was happening, he found his view of the world flipped 180 degrees before his consciousness faded into nonexistence.

"Devour."

Chapter 258 Base[4]

Damien's low-level Void Essence leaked from his body and surrounded that of the man in front of him. He had acted quick, as his prior experience had already told him what'd happen if he failed to devour a Nox on time.

Even the devil worshippers would turn into inky liquid when they died. Damien had already formulated a theory on the reason for this.

It was due to the unnatural mana within their bodies.

The Nox were a strange species. Although Damien had already qualified the mana they used as Death mana, it wasn't pure death mana. Or rather, it was a breed of death mana that was unnatural.

But the Nox were born to handle such unnatural mana. As a trade-off, their intelligence was low like beasts and they lost the ability to use any other forms of mana.

It was the same concept of balance that the whole universe functioned on.

Damien guessed that this unnatural mana's incompatibility with the ambient mana of the world was the reason why Nox corpses couldn't be sustained. Though, he wasn't completely sure of this hypothesis.

This was the best he could do with the information he had. .

But none of that mattered at the moment. Due to Damien's timely intervention, he was able to devour the corpse before the liquefaction process even began.

Although he was curious about how the Nox mana would affect his body if he devoured it in the conventional sense, now wasn't the time for it. Damien had different plans for the essence that he had just acquired.

Now that he had obtained a slight amount of control over the Void Essence, he had more maneuverability when it came to its uses. For one, he didn't necessarily have to allow the essence he devoured into his body.

He could instead use it as a sort of limited fuel supply, as he was doing now. A blob of inky black substance surfaced on Damien's hand. While a part of it went into the plaque, the rest made its way into his subspace.

Damien's original subspace had become his Sanctuary, but he had made sure to set aside a portion of said Sanctuary to act as a subspace like before. After all, he still wanted item storage capability and he didn't want his items to simply be littered across the ground of the Sanctuary.

The reason he didn't just make a second subspace with just the normal capabilities of one was simple. The connection to the Sanctuary, while on the surface much more complicated and ethereal, was actually a lot firmer than the connection he had with his previous subspace.

The amount of delay between him sending his thoughts through the connection and receiving a response was almost negligible.

The effects of this were simple. He could easily store and withdraw things without even a single second of delay. Even if he wanted to use his subspace in battle, he wouldn't need to worry about losing momentum.

When the inky black essence made its way into the silver plaque in Damien's hand, it began to shudder slightly before transforming. A light blue diagram formed on its surface, depicting the area around him in the center of the plaque.

Surrounding the center, there were 5 shining dots in various directions. Even an idiot would be able to tell what they signified.

"Well, I guess I have 5 more tries to get some valuable information. Let's just hope that they're more useful than the idiot that I just met."

With those words, Damien immediately left the cave and flashed towards the closest location on the map.



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Flames raged through the surrounding atmosphere, a massive storm brewed in the skies and furious black lightning struck down at the ground below.

Within this chaotic atmosphere, 3 men stood facing each other in the air, while countless abominations stood on the ground.

But none of these abominations were given the opportunity to do anything. They were unable to even move before they were either burned or fried to ash by the thundering lightning or raging flames that surrounded them.

Of the three men in the air, two of them were already broken. Their arms were twisted in unnatural shapes and their legs were bleeding profusely. Their bodies were riddled with holes in various places, leaking endless amounts of black blood.

Their terrified eyes stared at the monster in front of them. They had heard of his deeds already. In fact, the reason they had teamed up was because they had heard of his deeds. And yet, even together they couldn't cause any lasting damage to him.

Just like the two of them, the man was riddled with injuries. There were deep gashes in his chest and back from their combined attack, and even one of his arms was dangling limply at his side. But they knew.

These same harrowing injuries had been much worse only minutes before. Even the man's arm was half torn to the point where it'd have to be regrown if he ever wanted to use it again.

But under their incredulous eyes, he had done just that. The space around him had twisted and distorted, making it so none of their attacks could reach him. And within that distorted space, the man leisurely regrew his arm before once again engaging in battle with them.

Looking at the two pitch-black-skinned men in front of him, the man smiled. “It’s simple really. All I asked is which direction it is to Astoria City. How can you treat a humble traveler like myself with such hostility?”

The men got the urge to cough blood at his words. Humble traveler? You were the one who barged into our hideout and started raining hell!

But the words were stuck in their throats. Their abominations had already been wiped out and they were on death’s door. They knew that the man didn’t even need information from them, he was just toying with them before killing them.

This only made their rage bubble further. Without hesitation, they once again charged at the man.

The inky black mana that surrounded their bodies raged violently, being fueled by everything they had. Even their remaining life force was being transmitted into their final attack.

Their goal was simple. If they were going to die anyway, they’d at least take him with them.

Seeing their attempt, the man’s smile deepened. “If you were going to act like that, why didn’t you just say so?”

Putting his hand out, the man clenched the space in front of him as if it was tangible. Then, he tore it open.

Space collapsed, causing heaven and earth to become one. A pitch black essence much more terrifying than their own leaked out of the space and consumed them.

They could feel their very existence being torn to shreds. The life force they injected into their attacks was as flimsy as paper in front of this essence.

“If you thought that you actually had a chance because I let you injure me, well, never mind. What’s the use of talking to dead people, right?”

It didn’t take long for their lives to be reaped. The raging battlefield soon regained its calm.

Looking at the scene in front of him, Damien’s eyes hardened. None of the sarcastic demeanor he showed to those two Nox beings was present any longer.

“4 generals. That’s not something that can be handled by a mere barrier. I need to hurry over before things take a turn for the worse.”

Muttering those incomprehensible words, his body flashed and disappeared as if it never existed in the space around him at all.

Chapter 259 Base [5]

It had taken an entire month for Damien to wipe out the 5 bases he saw on the plaque, though most of that time was spent traveling.

And honestly, the ones he met were nothing worth mentioning. He only got two pieces of useful information.

The first was that these 6 that he had killed were near the bottom rung of soldiers within the enemies.

The division was relatively simple. There were the regular soldiers, which were usually the abominations that Damien had seen earlier. He found out that there were even abominations stronger than the canon fodder he saw, but they simply weren't necessary for this region.

Next came the Captains, who would usually take command over the abominations. After them, there were the generals who commanded the captains, the commanders who ordered the generals, and finally, there were 4 kings that had absolute control over all the rest.

The number of captains that even the 6 Damien had run into knew was in the hundreds, as for generals, there were still tens of them. There were exactly 10 commanders who directly reported to the 4 kings. It was rumored that there was an even higher rank, but none of these normal soldiers would know any tangible information about it.

The only reason they even knew this much of the structure was because these Nox beings, who called themselves Demons actually had a relatively streamlined structure, as well as a main base where most of the important personnel stayed.

One of the captains had worked as a runner for a general before he was given his current station, which was the only reason Damien was able to get the information he currently had. The rest were useless, and the two he fought at the end were unlike the others. They would rather die than give up information.

It was from the same captain that Damien learned the second piece of information. This one far more crucial.

4 generals, 50 captains, and thousands of mindless abominations were currently charging a single city. .

Said captain was also supposed to join the charge, but he had been unfortunate enough to meet Damien before he could actually make his way over.

Damien didn't know why such a force was necessary to take over a single city filled with mortals, but he felt there had to be a good reason.

And most likely, that reason was the geniuses who entered the secret realm with him.

He already knew that the demons wanted blood to soak the land. Although he had originally thought it was only human blood they wanted, he realized that the blood of those who came from the outside world was probably much more valuable.

The differences between the beasts from the outside world and those born within this realm, Damien hadn't figured this out yet. But he never expected to find all the answers from simple foot soldiers. No, he would naturally kill his way up the hierarchy until he knew everything that he needed to know.

'Demon Generals are supposedly around the mid-levels of 3rd class while the commanders are at the peak of this realm. But the strength of the kings was obviously unknown to those weaklings.'

Damien didn't know what the strength of the kings would be. The restrictions on this realm obviously made it so only 3rd class beings could enter, which was why the Beast Kings sent their geniuses in instead of going themselves, but judging from the strength differences between each level of the demon army, Damien could only assume that the Kings were at 4th class.

'I don't have the capabilities to deal with a 4th class being yet. Even the weakest of them received baptism from the universe, which makes them untouchable to the lower ranks.'

However, he had a trump card that might be able to overcome that boundary. The problem was that the Void Essence he could control wasn't at the level where it could do so.

'If I can tap into the same power I had while building the Sanctuary, killing the Kings should be possible if I use concealment. As for a head-on battle, that isn't within my capabilities.'

It was the first time Damien had ever considered assassination as a tactic, but it was only out of necessity. Plus, he didn't even know if his conjectures were right.

'But, planning for the worst-case scenario is best. I can't be lax in the face of 4th class beings.'

Damien's thoughts raced as he rushed towards the city named Astoria. He only knew its general location, but with his awareness and the fact that it would be surrounded by an army soon, he didn't think it'd be too hard to find.

'Well, considering that the people defending the city also received strengthening from that magma, I doubt they'd need too much help dealing with the army. Especially if there's a good number of them. But, that doesn't mean I can let them steal my kills, can I?'

Damien grinned. The dull golden star on his forehead shone as if it was craving to see the blood of demons.

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“Fire Phoenix Faction members, gather!”

A piercing cry rang through the city of Astoria, even overshadowing the ominously ringing bell that signaled the incoming danger.

Immediately, 25 people shot into the sky and rushed towards the direction of the cry.

It didn’t take long for the group to gather. Standing in front of them was a fiery red woman looking into the distance with a hawk-like gaze.

Feeling the 25 presences behind her, she slowly turned around.

“Heed my command. There are thousands of enemies marching towards our city as we speak. With their current speed, they should arrive in 2 days.”

The 25 geniuses felt their gazes become serious. Thousands of enemies, and only 25 of them. This wasn’t a battle that seemed easy to win.

But Feng Qing’er didn’t allow them to breed fear for too long. In a battle like this one, morale was crucial.

“Do not worry. For the most part, their troops seem to be 2nd class beings. It shouldn’t be too hard for us to deal with them. But there are still many lower 3rd class beings littered within their ranks.”

“Although this battle seems to be one we are fated to lose, I believe otherwise! We are the peak geniuses within the entirety of the 3000 Beast Mountain Range! How big is our mountain range? How many younger generation members live within it? Yet, all of us placed within the top 1000 of that gargantuan number.”

Flames were slowly lit in the dim eyes of those 25 geniuses.

“If you cower now, how can you call yourself a genius? Plus, did you forget? We need to kill in order to pass on to the next trial. If we do not pass on, it means death. So, kill to your heart’s content! Set your emotions ablaze and fight!”

“Yes, ma’am!”

A unified cry rang out from those 25. Remembering their goal in this secret realm, their morale was immediately revitalized. Feng Qing’er’s words obviously had some effect, but the prospect of the Primordial Undying Fruits had even more. In the face of such a treasure, fear became an unknown concept.

After seeing to it that her subordinates were given the proper positions for the coming battle, Feng Qing’er focused her gaze into the distance once again.

‘Those 4 in the palanquins seem to be the hardest to deal with. From their auras alone, I should be able to take them. However, I don’t know if they’re hiding their strength.’



Feng Qing'er was only wary of those 4, as well as the beasts they were riding. As for the rest, most of them could be wiped out with a single flick of her wrist if she so wished.

'Luckily for us, we don't need to divert too much focus to defending the city. As long as the barrier stays active, we can wholeheartedly focus on battle.'

Sending her awareness into the star on her forehead, Feng Qing'er smiled. After this battle, a purple star was guaranteed. And if she was lucky, she wouldn't be too far from a black star as well.

She had supreme confidence in her abilities. Even if it was her against the entire army, she'd still have confidence. That was simply the type of person she was.

Her pride might be great enough to pierce the heavens, but she had always had the ability to back it up. When had she, Feng Qing'er, ever been forced to suffer a loss?

When she thought this far, she suddenly remembered a certain human that she had recently met, but she quickly shook her head.

"That doesn't count. That bastard only knows how to flee. Hmph, let's see how he runs next time I see him."

"Oh? Thinking so hard about a man is a rare sight from the little Miss isn't it?" A playful voice rang out from behind her.

Without even turning around, she responded. “And why would I need to spend time thinking about a man? Rather, isn’t it you who has been showing an unnatural amount of interest?”

Looking at the girl behind her, Feng Qing’er smirked slightly. “I almost feel bad for him. To enter your radar has never been a good thing.”

The girl’s beautiful black eyes twinkled at her words. “Who knows? Maybe I truly am interested in him. I wonder what kind of fun things he can show me.”

With a slight smile on her face, she turned around and left. Feng Qing’er could only watch the receding back with a helpless expression on her face.

‘Ah, why did it have to be me that got stuck with her?’

Shaking her head at her predicament, she also left the area. Now, it was time to prepare for battle.

Chapter 260 Base [6]

A day quickly passed as Feng Qing’er and her faction members prepared for the coming assault. At the moment, they were spread evenly in front of the gates of the city, creating a defense on all sides.

Rumble!

The ground rumbled and quaked from the impact of thousands of footsteps striking it at once. However, there was no uniformity among them.

Looking at the sea of black that was approaching from all sides, the 25 geniuses who were trying to defend the city together felt a shiver run down their spines.

Were they really supposed to take all of these enemies alone? Even with the consolation from Feng Qing'er that most of them were weak, the sheer number was enough to cause their morale to plummet.

Seeing them like this, Feng Qing'er sighed. Even she couldn't do anything at this point. She was also feeling some apprehension looking at the incoming tide.

No matter how much battle experience she had gained within the 3000 Beast Mountain Range, a situation like this was naturally not a part of it. When would any normal person find themselves facing an army alone?

But Feng Qing'er didn't spend too much time thinking about these things. Regardless, she was already in this situation. It was kill or be killed. If she cowered, if she showed even an ounce of fear, those under her would feel their own morale plummet even further.

Steeling herself, she bravely walked ahead of the defensive line they had formed, leaving the protection of the barrier.

"Geniuses of the 3000 Beast Mountain Range, it is time for us to show these demons why we are titled as such!".

For what reason should she allow the enemy to gain an advantage? She, Feng Qing'er would be the first to strike.

Wings of flame burst from her back, flapping powerfully and shooting her into the air. By the time she reached her intended height, the flame projection had already become more corporeal.

Her sharp gaze scanned the incoming army, and immediately, her wings flapped once again.

Hundreds of fiery red feathers detached themselves and shot forth like needles, charging into the crowd of abominations.

Boom!

A flame lit within the ranks. With every feather that shot forth, an abomination was combusted. Small explosions rang through the battlefield.

But even with the death of hundreds of abominations, the numbers didn't seem to shrink at all. In fact, the hole that was left was immediately filled in by other abominations.

“RAAAAAH!”

A loud cry rang out, followed by many more. The rumbling footsteps that shook the earth became even more pronounced as the abominations began their charge.

Boom! Clash!

A fierce battle began. Seeing how Feng Qing'er fearlessly charged forward, the other geniuses didn't want to get left behind.

They rushed out into the battlefield, mana costing their bodies to enhance their speed. Massive waves of elemental attacks continuously struck the oncoming tide of abominations, fiercely dwindling their numbers.

Or at least, that was what they expected. But the geniuses realized they had severely underestimated how big the difference in numbers was.

They were expecting thousands. Even if it took a while, they could deal with thousands of 2nd class beings. But they found that even with hundreds of abominations dying every minute, their battle didn't seem to end.

Seeing their plight, Feng Qing'er decided she needed to make a bigger move. From the sky where she stood, rings of heat began to emanate.

Burn!

The sky itself burned. And from the ashes rose a flaming Phoenix projection. Its massive wings flapped, a screech resounded through the air.

It charged into the crowd of abominations, causing them to burst into flames with ease. By the time the Phoenix projection faded, thousands of abominations had already died.

The geniuses were invigorated by her display of power. Tsunami-like tides formed in the air, powerful tornados joining them to create a hurricane of untold proportions.

In other areas, the ground itself ruptured and began to swallow hoards of abominations, pillars of magma shooting out and devouring the rest.

The geniuses no longer cared about taking things slow. They felt inferior to the girl in front of them, who was fighting much harder than any of them. And so, they let out everything they had.

Their attacks, fueled by the frustration of the endless onslaught they had been facing for many minutes already, charged into the tides of abominations and razed everything they touched.

But even with this, the true battle had yet to begin.

On the outskirts of the battle, a curious scene was taking place. Light winds breezed through the charging crowd of abominations as if their furious charge was nothing special.

However, everywhere these light winds passed, the heads of abominations would mysteriously be separated from their bodies.

It wasn't a matter of one or two at a time, but hundreds at once. The mindless beasts didn't even have the chance to reach the main battlefield before dying.

Black ink covered the ground, painting the grass black. And out of this blackness emerged a girl.

"Hmm, these guys are no fun. Where are the stronger ones?" Her tone didn't seem to match the surrounding atmosphere at all, but the girl didn't seem like she noticed.

Suddenly, her gaze pointed towards a certain direction. There, a congregation of 10 demons who looked much more humanoid than the abominations were gathered.

“Maybe those guys?” Tilting her head cutely, the girl once again melted into the darkness of the ground.

When her figure reappeared, she was already in front of the Demon Captains.

“So, would you like to play a game with me?”

A bright smile decorated the girl’s face as she spoke. But to the demon captains who hadn’t even been able to sense her approach, it was the smile of a devil even greater than them.

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Countless battles raged on outside the city of Astoria. Flashing lights of various colors, as well as elemental phenomena, decorated the atmosphere in a myriad of colors.

Concealed within the spatial layers, Damien watched it all unfold.

“I guess they aren’t called geniuses for nothing.”

Although the performance of those 25 geniuses could be considered spectacular, to Damien who had already killed thousands of abominations, they were merely rookie numbers.

His focus was mainly on two girls who were dominating the battlefield.

In the front, there was Feng Qing'er. Her flames seemed just as powerful as his sunflames, melting abominations with a mere touch. Phoenix projections flew across the sky and feathers rained down from the heavens. She didn't even move a single step from her spot in the sky, making it evident that she wasn't even trying yet.

Abruptly, 20 black streaks shot into the sky, encircling Feng Qing'er. Her gaze turned on them, a flaming pride in her eyes. It was clear that even in front of such an obstruction, she remained unfazed.

As for the other girl, her battle drew much less attention. Surrounded by demon captains, she had a bright smile on her face. Cuts and gashes randomly appeared on the bodies of those around her faster than they could react, and even their own shadows seemed to be fighting against them.

Although it didn't look grand or incredibly destructive, how could Damien's eyes be wrong? He could clearly see the raging sea of mana she was hiding in her small body.

"Not bad, not bad. But if I let you hog the spotlight any longer, there won't be anything left for me."

Above the gradually heating battlefield, thundering clouds began to form and gather.