

Void 271

Chapter 271 Demons [5]

“Was there a mishap?”

“We don’t know for certain. We have lost contact with the forces that were sent to Astoria.”

“Just lost contact? Didn’t the inheritor go with them? We all know what her personality is like.”

“Indeed, she has a tendency to be willful. We can’t make any conclusions yet, but does it even matter if their fail?”

“That’s true. Even if they were sacrificed in this mission, it doesn’t affect the grand plan at all. In fact, it could even have benefits.”

“Getting rid of the inheritor isn’t a bad trade-off for a portion of the plan going off rails.”

Within the pantheon, hushed voices rang out, discussing matters that seemed to contain an importance that normal people couldn’t fathom.

“Have we received any new orders from the Lord yet?”

“None. It seems the Lord wants us to continue with how things are going.”

“Yes, if it’s the Lord’s plan, we do not need to question anything. What seems like failure to us might have been his goal all along.”

“Has anyone heard news about the outsiders?”

A new question was brought up, attracting the attention of those present.

“The outsiders? Aren’t they just kids that were sent in? Why should we care about them?”

“They may be kids, but that doesn’t mean they don’t pose a threat. Have we learned about the level of their strength?”

“Hmm, other than Astoria, the outsiders found in other cities have been subpar. Even against mere Generals, they were forced to struggle. If even a single one of us moved, it’d be over for them.”

“I don’t understand why the Lord would place any importance on them. They aren’t worth the attention of someone as great as him.”

“Enough. We don’t question the Lord’s decisions, we only follow them. He has raised us from birth for this purpose.”

“There’s no need for you to mention it. We all know, and we all agree.”

The beings within the pantheon nodded their heads. They only had one purpose for existence, and that was to serve the Lord. Power? Fame? Pleasure? None of it mattered to them as much as a single word from him.

“In any case, we have nothing to do besides follow what he says. There’s no reason for us to personally act.”

“Have the Demon Kings shown any strange movement?”

“None. They rarely leave their castles in the first place, so the spies we placed are enough to surveil them thoroughly.”

“Do not become complacent. Those four are different from the rest of us, and they are much more powerful. Although they serve the Lord, they all have their own agendas.”

A solemn atmosphere covered the group.

“We must be certain that they don’t prioritize their own goals. We need to control them and keep them on a tight leash.”

“If only it weren’t for this damn restriction we could-!”

They gnashed their teeth. If it wasn’t for the restriction placed by the cursed deity, they’d have surpassed the Demon Kings in strength long ago. But they couldn’t do anything about it. They were forced to stay within the levels of 3rd class, and they couldn’t even deepen their comprehension any further than they already had.

“There’s no need to discuss this matter any further. Make sure to keep a good watch on our forces and prepare for the Lord’s orders at any time. Until then, we can only wait.

A series of affirmations followed the statement. An eerie silence once again filled the pantheon.

Within one of the four large castles located not far from the pantheon, a man sat in his study with a gloomy aura surrounding him.

His gaze was focused on the papers in front of him, his long blonde hair brushing against the desk. From the crease on his forehead and the beads of sweat that trickled down his brow, it was evident that he was under a great deal of stress.

Crack!

The pen in his hand snapped in half. The man’s hand had clenched hard enough to turn the remains of the pen into dust.

“Get rid of her? You think you can get rid of her? You think I’ll allow it?”

The man gnashed his teeth as he muttered. His frightening red eyes looked especially bloodshot.

“Dammit!”

His fist shattered the desk in front of him, he crazily began destroying everything around him. Lamps were thrown, bookshelves were toppled. He looked as if he had gone crazy.

“If she had died, I’d know by now. There isn’t a single person in this world who can overcome my soul technique. So why? Why can’t I reach her?”

He wanted to roar. He wanted to vent his frustration. He wanted to kill. But he knew that most of the servants attending to him within his castles were planted there. Any signs of agitation he showed would only be used against him.

“Haa...”

The man took a deep breath to calm himself down. His bloodshot eyes slowly became as tranquil as an undisturbed lake. Any emotion on his face was wiped clean.

In this state, he slowly walked to the window that overlooked the mountainside.

His gaze briefly landed on the demons in the city below him, but soon went past it. With his level of existence, he could even faintly see Astoria in the distance.

But the city was calm. There was no army invading it, and there wasn’t even a trace of destruction anymore due to the workings of the Trial World.

However, he had seen it previously. He had felt that foreboding sense and watched carefully at the location where the battle had been.

Seas of flames, flickering shadows. With just this much, there wouldn't have been enough danger. What he was truly wary of were the thunderclouds that appeared later.

After those thunderclouds appeared, the battle soon halted, and he lost the connection he once had.

“What the hell happened? Was there a mishap? Did the flames go out of control?”

Rather than the individuals who had wiped out the army of insects that had been sent out, he was more worried about the flame. If that flame took over, it would end everything. What would he have worked so hard for at that point?

“The other three should have been watching as well. What are they up to? Are they rejoicing at my misfortune?”

His barely concealed fury almost erupted again, but he managed to calm himself down.

“If the flames had taken over, I should have at least felt something. And even if they took over, the connection should still be maintained. Her flames don't have a fully formed will yet, so there's no way it'd be able to consciously cut me off.”

In the end, the man could only sigh in desperation and move away from his spot at the window. This study was his only safe place. It was the only place he could drop his facade and be himself.

The eyes within his palace couldn't penetrate it, since he had put years of effort into making it what it was.

And because of this, he had no reason to stop the single tear that fell from his eye.

“My daughter...I hope you are still alive. Even if you are in pain, I hope you can endure. You are all I have left in this world. If you die...I will make sure that the world dies with you, even if I have to sell my soul to do so.”

Chapter 272 Demons [6]

10,000 years. Was that a period of time that could be grasped by a human? Was that a period of time that any normal existence would be able to look at and understand?

It wasn't. It wasn't something he would've been able to grasp if he hadn't experienced it himself.

It had been 10,322 years since his race first arrived in this realm. He knew because he had counted every day of it.

The Primordial Undying Tree. The rumors about the heavenly treasure superseded it. He had heard of it long before its realm opened to the world.

Back then, there were no restrictions like the one he was subjected to now. There was nothing limiting the strength of those who entered.

He remembered that day as if it had happened only yesterday. Their race that once boasted millions was reduced to only ten thousand. Oh that day, every single one of them decided to take the risk.

After all, there were benefits within the realm, and there was only extinction outside of it.

But never in their wildest imagination did they think that their only path was extinction. Was it fate? He asked himself countless times.

No, it wasn't fate, it was simply the whims of a being far more powerful than they could have fathomed.

Their race, which had been reduced to ten thousand, has been further reduced to only a few thousand. Even of those few thousand, only four remained who had power.

But even the four of them ended up corrupted.

Those who remembered the true purpose and origin of their race had already died. The rest had been brainwashed since birth.

Now, even his own race was nothing more than enemies like the rest. Even the other three who remembered were nothing more than enemies.

In this world; he alone bore the grudge and resentment of ten thousand. He alone had the courage and grit to act upon that grudge.

He had once met a woman similar to him. A woman that questioned the reason why their race was in such a situation, where they were nothing more than glorified slaves.

What interested him most about her, though, was that she was born so long after the original calamity that the circumstances should only be normal for,

Was she blessed to have a brain like hers, or was she cursed? At first, he thought it was the former. He was happy to have met her. The time he spent with her made him realize that his efforts weren't totally in vain. He even had a child with her after some time passed.

But that woman, perhaps she was fated to live a short life. Or perhaps, the gods above wanted his thirst for vengeance to rear its ugly head again.

They didn't even try to make her death seem like an accident. They boasted about it, parading her corpse around his castle as if it was some kind of trophy.

And he couldn't do anything about it no matter how much he wanted to. Such were the effects of the corruption he had been forced to undergo.

The only things he had left in this world were his vengeance and his daughter. But now, even she had disappeared.

"You have to..."

Stay alive.

Please.

Stay alive.

He transmitted his earnest desires into his mana. He knew there were two gods in this realm, and only one of them had the capacity to help him.

He knew that god at least had some amount of conscience. He knew that god was opposing the vile being he resented with all his heart. If it wasn't for that, then the restriction that prevented his enemies from getting stronger wouldn't be in place as it was now.

And so he pleaded. He pleaded with everything he had to that god in hopes that it would hear him and grant a miracle.

And time passed. It was only a few tens of minutes, but it felt like eons to him.

[The Primordial Undying Tree has heard your wish.]

Until a notification that he had seen only once before showed itself in front of him again.

Furious clouds of thunder and lightning raged through the air. With every strike that lightning bore down, tens and hundreds of abominations were turned to ash.

、 Even the Demon Captains, who saw themselves far above the abominations, we're met with the same fate,

They looked into the sky at the terrifying being that was causing such a calamity to befall them. Even though they were the demons, they felt that the moniker suited him far better.

Boom!

Another roar of thunder sounded out, and another peel of lightning struck the ground. The remaining Demon Captains were torn asunder as if they were rag dolls.

As for the man who commanded the lightning? He stood in the sky with a broad grin on his face.

“Is this enough? Or would you like some more? Well, don't get too full on appetizers or you might not be able to handle the main course!”

There were no Demon Captains left to listen to his words, or they might've coughed blood and died on the spot. This was an appetizer? What about the pandemonium he was causing looked like an appetizer to him?

But the man's gaze was focused on the four palanquins that stood proud at the back of the army, at a point where the destruction didn't reach.

“Man; what’s with you generals and your love of this gaudy setup? Palanquins on elephants, sure it looks noble from the outside, but if there’s only trash inside, doesn’t that ruin the whole image?”

Provoking words continuously left his mouth as lighting wantonly raged around him. Enough time had passed already that the army that used to stand before him had been reduced to dust.

The star on his forehead suddenly shone with a bright purple light.

“Eh? Already? But this is only army number two! By the time I finish the Demon Kings, won’t this thing go past the White and Black stars?”

He really had to wonder. Well, he already knew that this realm wasn’t necessarily designed for someone like him to commit mass slaughter of abominations and Demon Captains. No normal genius would even think about taking on this kind of army by themselves.

“I wonder how those two are doing. Their stars are probably white already, considering how they were already far past me when we first met.”

Well, I guess I’ll have to clean up soon and sweep Darknorth as well. He thought. Such a thought made his grin turn ferocious.

He no longer waited for those Demon Generals to respond to his provocation. His body bent like a bow, using space itself as a foothold to shoot himself forward.

Boom!

The air exploded as he passed by, and in an instant, he had arrived before the four palanquins.

Reddish orange combined with pitch black lightning and coated his arms in a dreary color. Without pausing his steps, he crashed into the first palanquin at full speed, his fist shooting forth to impact the being within.

Boom!

A massive explosion rang out as the elephantine beast exploded into chunks of meat due to the force of the collision. A black streak flew from within the explosion, stabilizing itself a few hundred meters away.

The Demon General had a massive scythe in his hand, but its blade seemed to have a small crack on it.

“Keuk...!”

A trail of blood left his lips as he glared at the man standing in the middle of the explosion.

And Damien flashed a bright smile back at him.

“If you get this injured just by my greeting, how will you be able to withstand my farewell?”

Chapter 273 Demons [7]

Swoosh!

The winds were whipped into a frenzy as three figures shot backwards at the same time, leaving their palanquins and making distance from Damien.

They only stopped their retreat after regrouping with their comrade, who had been blown away during the previous impact.

“Oho! The four of you are acting together, huh? Very shameless of you, if I do say so myself.” Damien mocked with a grin.

“Hmph. If you think such vulgar provocation can incite us, then you must not have a brain. Didn’t you already realize that strategy wouldn’t work when you were cleaning up the ants earlier?” One of the Demon Generals scoffed.

“Hey! Don’t call them ants! Ants have feelings too!”

But all he got in response was more mocking words. Faint signs of a vein popping from his forehead emerged on his face.

“Enough. Jeriah, Trom, Dorte, the three of you go around and surround him. I’ll take the lead. Make sure he doesn’t get any advantage on us.”

The three Demon Generals nodded before spreading out. Damien simply watched them and let them do as they pleased.

Since the dust cloud from his explosive entrance had finally cleared up, he was able to take a good look at the Demon Generals that he was facing this time.

All four were male, and just like those from before, they were generally handsome. They shared the same black hair and eyes, but their other features were all varied.

Their main differences were the locations of their non-human body parts. The leading Demon General, who hadn't announced his name yet, had a pair of twisting goat horns protruding from his forehead. The one named Jeriah had a demonic tail, Trom was covered in scales from head to toe, and Dorte had a pair of bat wings spanning from his shoulder blades.

'See, these guys look more like demons. What's up with Elitra and her human appearance? Even the All-Seeing eyes didn't see through her, so it wasn't an illusion.'

Perhaps a transformation? Damien imagined Elitra with demonic features for a second before shaking his head. Wasn't he supposed to be in battle right now? He really needed to learn how to control his stray thoughts.

While Damien was relaxedly thinking about random things, the Demon Generals finally got in formation. They warily watched the man standing in the center of them, waiting for him to make a move.

But since when was Damien someone who would meet his enemies' expectations? He simply stood there with a finger in his ear as if the current situation had nothing to do with him.

"Now!"

The leading Demon General shouted, and the three others charged at once.

From Damien's back, a twisting tail shot forward aiming to pierce him. From his two sides, the other two Demon Generals rushed forward with fists outstretched.

The three attacks that seemed to want to crush Damien where he stood soon reached their target with a boom.

But Damien was no longer there. His body flashed at the moment of impact, appearing behind Jeriah and clenching his tail in his hands. Using it like a chain, Damien swung Jeriah's body into the area where he was standing a second before.

Boom!

Two punches landed on the body of their comrade, causing him to cough up blood as he tried to retreat, but Damien didn't let go of his firm hold on his tail.

"Keuk!"

"Be careful! He can teleport!" The leading Demon General shouted.

"Ohhh, thanks for the heads up, Captain Obvious! Now they know that I can teleport! What great information to have!"

Damien yanked the tail in his hand, causing Jeriah to swing in his direction. Jeriah's eyes widened due to the pain, but in that split second, he steeled himself. Using the momentum of Damien's tug, he shot towards his opponent.

Boom!

He threw a punch forward the second he reached Damien, not wanting to give his opponent an opportunity to teleport. At the same time, Dorte flapped his wings roughly and appeared behind Damien.

For the second time, two punches shot towards his body. The only difference was, this time there was black mana coating the two fists.

Damien grinned. His right hand was outstretched backwards, positioned to catch the fist behind him, while his left shot towards Jeriah to meet him head-on.

Blazing flames shot forth from his fist, meeting the black mana and causing a small tug of war to begin between the two manas. Sunflames raged towards the inky death aura while the Nox mana tried to corrode it.

Boom!

At that time, a second impact rang out as Damien's hand caught Dorte's fist.

But Dorte couldn't be happy with his success. An odd current of mana encircled his body, causing his movements to gradually slow down to the point where his fist didn't carry any force by the time it hit.

,com Even when he tried to move or use his mana to block the force, he was unable to do anything to it.

“So? How's the combo attack going? Actually, there's only two of you attacking right now, what happened to the other two? Scared? Or maybe they're too weak to join in?”

Damien casually chatted while holding off the two assaults coming towards him. Feeling enraged by his casualness, Jeriah threw his other fist forward, trying to throw a hook into Damien's stomach.

Bang!

“Keuk!”

A swift kick landed on his chest before his arm could reach Damien at all.

“Now, now. Stay obedient and don't try to be an overachiever. Don't you know that it'll only get you killed faster?”

Damien spoke lightly while twisting his body to the right.

Swoosh!

A black beam shot passed his head as he did so.

“Oh! So the leader is a ranged combatant. What about the last guy, what about him?”

Damien’s fist, which was still connected to Jeriah’s as their manas clashed, swiftly changed positions to grab his wrist. His mana gushed into his hands, causing space to distort around the two fists in his grip.

“”Argh!””

Two pained shouts rang out along with the sound of bones cracking. Damien then let go of their hands and flashed away again.

The frenzied attack of the final combatant, Trom, reached his position at the same time.

“You should’ve sat patiently and watched. Didn’t I tell you that you’d get hurt otherwise?”

Damien’s voice was like the devil’s whisper, ringing into Trom’s ear as if he was right behind him.

Trom quickly twisted his body and threw a heavy kick backwards, but he only impacted air.

“I can teleport, remember? Even your leader already told you about it! How can you be so dumb?”

‘Is the level of Demon General actually not that great?’ Damien wondered. He was genuinely surprised by how stupid they were.

Elitra’s case could be excused, since she was fighting an internal battle rather than fighting him. And although the three that were with her were strong, they weren’t anything special besides the fact that they had combat prowess above their level.

‘Is it a matter of practical experience?’ Damien thought as he saw the Demon Generals flailing around at his provocations. He was just teleporting around while throwing out random statements to rile them up, but they hadn’t been able to follow his teleportation at all.

This was the effect of Tian Yang’s teachings to mask the spatial ripples, but even that could only be useful against opponents below his level and perhaps those around the same level as him.

‘Ah.’

That’s when he realized it. Was it that they were too weak, or that he was too strong? Even when he went all out in the past, he always had more moves that he decided not to use or didn’t have the need to use.

It could be said that the versatility of his destructive power basically made him into a bag of trump cards.

But this fact made Damien slightly disappointed. He liked being strong, and he liked the fact that opponents like these couldn’t cause him trouble, but...

‘Will I ever face a situation where I have to go all out without facing an opponent that I never had a chance to beat in the first place?’

He didn’t want to get conceited, but he couldn’t help it. His defeats were always either in the face of a large group of opponents more powerful than him, or an opponent that vastly outstripped his power level to the point where the fact that he was even fighting became a joke.

‘Well, I’ll find them someday. Until then, I guess I should just take care of the problem in front of me.’

Damien’s body reappeared several meters away from the group of demon generals. He was no longer in the mood to play around.

Chapter 274 Demons [8]

The city of Ecatra was usually a relatively calm place. Especially considering that beasts usually didn’t roam around this area, the citizens led their daily lives in peace.

However, today, the area outside of the city was wreathed in flames. The ground and even air were scorched to the point where no life could prosper within.

But the citizens didn’t mind it. After all, those flames were the only reason they weren’t being barraged by an army of abominations at the moment. That army which brought despair to their hearts for a brief instant was burned to cinders by the fairy that arrived in front of them.

Feng Qing’er looked at her handiwork and nodded in satisfaction. Since she couldn’t teleport like Damien, she wasn’t able to intercept the army before it reached the city, but she was at least able to arrive before the attack had actually begun.

And she immediately went to work. She didn't try to use any fancy techniques or coordination. Since she didn't have to bring the morale of other people up, she simply went wave after wave of Phoenix flames into the massive crowd of abominations until their numbers had dwindled to zero.

Now, the only thing left in front of her were those 4 Demon Generals who had hid within their palanquins until they were the only ones left.

“Are you going to come out now, or should I come to you?” Feng Qing'er growled as she gazed upon their location.

Tufts of flame shot from the ground after her words, impacting the elephantine creatures and burning holes into their bodies.

、 “Haa...”

A light sigh could be heard from within the main palanquin. Slowly, the veil blocking it from the outside world was lifted and a man stepped out.

‘A man?’

Feng Qing'er almost doubted her mind for classifying the being in front of her as a man. After all, he could be considered beautiful more than he was handsome.

Long flowing hair and a feminine face that would cause even the straightest of men to swoon. The incongruity between his features made Feng Qing'er feel an unknown disgust.

After him, three other Demon Generals stepped out of their palanquins. Feng Qing'er didn't know whether or not to be surprised by the fact that they were all women.

"Beauty, what's the point of needlessly fighting like this? Why don't you come join me instead?"

Feng Qing'er's eyes widened. What was this guy even talking about?

"And why would I do that? This young miss has no interest in scum." She scoffed.

"Ahhh, don't be like that. Just one night, and I promise you'll change your mind."

"One night, huh? Is that an entire night I get to spend burning you to a crisp? You know, that sounds interesting."

"Hahahaha! A feisty one, I see. But worry not, with the pleasure you'll feel with me, your temper will vanish on its own."

The man waved his hand, causing an invisible mana to emanate forth. The mana carried a scent that seemed to beckon Feng Qing'er towards him.

Feng Qing'er's eyes dulled slightly as she smelled that scent. Her body began to feel hot, and moved on its own to reach his location.

“That’s right. Beauty, there’s no better place for you to be than by my side.”

The man opened his arms wide to accept the woman who was slowly flying into his grasp. To be honest, he had been attracted to her since the moment he laid eyes on her.

A body that was curvaceous in all the right places, and a fiery temperament that was begging to be tamed under him. He almost couldn’t stop the lustful expression from surfacing on his face.

Feng Qing’er’s body floated forward until she was right in front of him. Her dull eyes seemed to be looking straight at him, but at the same time were focused in the distance.

The man leaned forward, his face getting closer to hers. “Just one more step, and you’ll experience a new world that you’ll never want to leave.”

Feng Qing’er’s foot went forward. Seeing this, the three women behind the man smirked.

She views herself so high above them just because she eliminated an army of ants? Now, she would become one of them, and they could truly teach her how to behave.

In that instant, with all four Demon Generals focused on Feng Qing’er’s face, a crackle of red flashed in her hand.

Swoosh!

Her hand shot forward faster than anyone could react. The distance between her and the Demon General had already been closed to the point where it was impossible to dodge without teleportation.

Boom!

A bolt of fire zapped between her fingers as she laid her hand on the man's chest. And in the next instant, they entered his body and exploded.

“AAAAH!”

A pitiful shriek left his mouth. His body shot backwards like a bullet due to the impact force. If one looked carefully, they'd be able to see a fist-sized hole in his stomach.

The three women behind him were still dazed at the sudden turn of events.

A pair of blistering hot flame wings emerged from Feng Qing'er's back and flapped powerfully, sending her to the man who was still flying backwards in an instant.

“You dare try to seduce me?! Do you know who I am?!” Feng Qing'er let out an enraged shout.

Her hand grabbed the man's face, causing him to suddenly halt. His previous momentum gathered into the area he was being held from and caused the bones in his neck to shatter.

But due to the demons' frightening tenacity, he survived. Unfortunately for him.

The small crackle of flames within Feng Qing'er's hand grew until it covered her palm. From there, it transferred into the man's seven orifices and began to burn.

“AGGGGGGG!”

He tried to scream, but due to the miniature explosions that continuously shook his throat, his scream was turned into incomprehensible blabber.

It wasn't just his throat though. His eyes were melting, his eardrums had been popped with extreme force, the bones of his nose and skull were cracked into pieces. It was a horrifying torture.

Although she didn't feel satisfied, she knew that she couldn't do much else, since the three women who came with the man were charging at her furiously.

But seeing them, she smiled beautifully. “He was right! I truly felt pleasure like I've never felt before!”

Feng Qing'er put on a pondering look. “Ah! Do you think I can feel that pleasure again if I do the same thing to you guys?”

She tossed the corpse of the man to the side. His face was no longer beautiful, it could barely even be registered as a face anymore. His hollowed eyes, nose, and mouth were still filled with the various liquids that had been produced due to Feng Qing'er's...treatment.

His body was still convulsing even though he didn't have any life force left, and that only served to enrage the three Demon Generals even further.

But without care for their feelings, Feng Qing'er expanded her wings to their full span and flapped them viciously. Tens, if not hundreds, of burning feathers coated in crackling flames shot forth, dying the heavens red.

And in the next instant, it felt like the world exploded.

Chapter 275 Demons [9]

"Ahh~ how sad. No matter how much I want to play with you, time doesn't seem to be on my side."

The words that seemed playful out of context were like the whispers of the devil to the demons who heard them.

"What to do, what to do. I could tear you apart with my own hands, but I don't want to get my clothes dirty. Hmm, what if you all kill each other? Oooh, that sounds fun! Let's do that!"

The demons shook. Their bodies wouldn't move no matter how much they tried to will them to.

"Ehhh~ you don't want to? But I was getting really excited! Okay~ how about I let whoever can stay alive until the end live! The rest will die either way."

"Fuck this! I'm leaving!"

A Demon General couldn't bear the psychological torture anymore. He dropped everything he had on him and ran blindly.

He wanted to know which direction he was moving in, but it was impossible. The world was filled with an endless darkness that even the mana within his body feared.

So he ran. He ran without thinking of anything else. Perhaps due to the fact that he couldn't see in the first place, he didn't notice when his sight was taken from him.

So he continued to run. Perhaps due to the silence that had enveloped them ever since that demonic woman showed up, he didn't realize when his hearing was taken from him.

His smell left next. It was at this point when he noticed. The stench of blood that had been plaguing him until now, where did it go?

"W-what did you do to me!"

It was what he thought he said, but he couldn't hear his own voice, so he wasn't sure. No, it wasn't even that, he couldn't even feel his mouth moving.

'M-my body?'

He knew he still had his body, otherwise, there was no way he'd be able to think. But where was it? Why couldn't he feel it? Where was the ground beneath his feet? No, where were his feet in the first place?

Humans, or rather, any creature that didn't live in the sky wouldn't realize the safety they felt on the land until it was taken from them. It wasn't until they were in the sky that they'd realize the security they had taken for granted.

The Demon General, whose senses were slowly returned to him, belatedly realized the situation. He
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could even see the rest of the demons' forces only a few meters away from him.

The Demon General watched the Demon Captains ramble off any excuse they could come up with. But he could see it. Their eyes were filled with only the single-minded greed to live.

In that moment, he couldn't do anything besides laugh. Laugh at his own powerlessness that got him into such a situation.

"Hahaha...I see. Good! So this is the true nature of our race that loves to act above all! Hahahaha! She's right! She was always right! We are nothing more than scum that deserves to die!"

The Demon General's eyes were laced with madness as he spoke.

"And since it's like that, why should it only be me? Why am I the one who has to die here? Hahahaha! How about you all join me on my trip to hell!"

With no regard for his body, the Demon General shot forward at full power, rousing all the mana he had left in his body.

No, it wasn't just his mana. Even his life force was burning to grant him more power.

In an instant(he arrived in front of the group of Demon Captains. With the power difference between the two, how could they even predict his actions?

Before the Demon Captains realized what was happening, the Demon General's body began to swell. It continued to swell until it looked like his vessel could no longer hold all the energy he had gathered within.

"See you all in hell, fuckers!"

BOOOOM!

An explosion so massive it caused cracks in the surrounding darkness blasted forth, consuming the Demon Captains within. Mana raged in the environment for many minutes afterwards before the scene finally calmed down.

The Demon General felt like he was in an endless abyss. There was nothing in existence besides his mind.

And time passed. For the Demon General, it was eons. Thousands upon thousands of years spent in darkness. His mind had been corroded past the point where anything close to sanity even existed anymore.

"AHHHHHHH!"

The first thing he had heard in ages was the mad shriek coming from his own mouth. But he no longer had the capacity to care.

After all, even without his conscious urging, his hands had already pierced his chest and ripped out his own heart.

The Demon General, whose senses were slowly returned to him, belatedly realized the situation. He could even see the rest of the demons' forces only a few meters away from him.

Perhaps, he should have felt despair. Maybe that was what was intended to happen. But he couldn't force himself to do so. Those around him could clearly see the bright relieved smile on his face as his body crumpled to the floor.

"Mm! That was fun! Actually, I change my mind. Let's have all of you do the same thing as him!"

The Demon Captains, the remaining three Demon Generals, and even the mindless abominations that the woman hadn't bothered to kill off earlier were shaking in fear.

Unlike the Demon General who died, they had all witnessed it. The Demon General ran in circles like a madman. He clawed his own face until it was hardly recognizable, his arms broke due to the force with which he was hitting the ground.

In the end, he banged his head on the ground while shrieking madly. It was only then that he clawed his heart out with his own hands.

Five minutes.

That was all the time it took for everything to happen from start to finish. It only took five minutes for her to drive a Demon General insane enough to kill himself for the sake of peace.

And the instant they realized that this devil woman wanted them to experience the same thing, pandemonium broke loose.

The mindless abominations acted on instinct, ripping off pieces of each other's flesh with their teeth and claws. The Demon Captains turned to each other and began a reckless brawl.

As for the Demon Generals, they fought the hardest. They had no intention of dying here.

Inky black mana filled the space of darkness, unseen but still extremely powerful. Massive explosions rocked the air and caused hordes of abominations to crumble.

The mayhem lasted for an hour before finally coming to a close. To the woman's surprise, the final contenders were a single Demon General and ten Demon Captains.

The Demon General was oozing black blood from several gashes along his skin. His body was fraught with so many injuries that he looked like he would die with a single push.

And against him, 10 Demon Captains who didn't actually fight each other at all.

"You! You lot dare to go against me?!"

The Demon General screamed in rage.

"W-we have no choice!"

"If you want to blame someone, blame that woman!"

"T-that's right! I just want to live!"

The woman, no, Qing Tan looked down at the scene she had caused with a bewitching smile on her face.

"Mmm~ that was even more fun than I imagined!"

She waved her hand, causing the massive dome of darkness that had enveloped the 50-kilometer radius around her to retract and enter her body.

Her body, which was floating in the air, slowly lowered to the ground. Her footsteps were light and without worries.

Her gaze turned north, to the location of the place where she would meet up with her other two companions.

"I wonder if they finished yet? Did that interesting guy show up before me? Well, I guess I'll just have to find out!"

And she skipped into the distance like a little girl who was just given her favorite treat.

Chapter 276 Demons [10]

A single round of sunflame dragon's breath was enough for all four Demon Generals to meet their end. Damien didn't even get the time to collect the efforts of all his provocation after he became disillusioned by their weakness.

Of course, they weren't idiots who would simply stand still and allow him to hit them, but using vector control and spatial manipulation to increase gravity around them and lower their mobility was more than enough to solve this problem.

Thinking about it though, this was the first time Damien actually moved his head when he used dragon's breath, causing the beam to cover a wider area. It was a good find that he didn't have to be stationary while using the attack, but it wasn't anything he hadn't figured out already.

After finishing, Damien started moving northwest in the direction of Darknorth. The entire time, he never even set foot near Scheherazade, which he was supposed to be protecting.

It's not like he needed the gratitude of those natives, and he didn't need to take a break before moving on either, so it was pointless to go there.

Damien's figure flashed in and out of existence as he made his way over to Darknorth. Although the 1-meter limit on teleportation got annoying when he needed to travel fast like this, it at least allowed him to train his fine control more than he had in the past.

Also, since he was using lightning to boost his speed as well, it allowed him to practice the elemental fusion he had been trying to achieve recently.

Like this, Damien traveled to Darknorth, arriving at the city 5 hours of constant teleporting.

“So this is Darknorth, huh.” He muttered to himself as he looked at the small city in front of him. It truly did possess a somewhat dark aura around it, which was probably its namesake.

“Those guys haven’t arrived here yet. The demon army is still pretty far away too.”

He couldn’t sense the demons even when he spread his awareness to its far reaches, but he didn’t think it’d take them too long to arrive.

The only reason he made it so early was because the entire confrontation between him and the Demon Generals didn’t last more than five minutes.

“Darknorth is the farthest of the three cities from Astoria, and considering how the army hadn’t reached Scheherazade yet when I caught up to them, the demon city is also probably somewhere in that same area.”

It was a logical deduction. Thinking that he had to go back to Astoria and look for the demon city later, Damien sat down where he stood.

“Not like I’m in a hurry. 5 hours of constant teleporting can get annoying.”

He still had around half his mana pool left, but he decided to fill it up to the brim while he waited for Feng Qing'er and Qing Tan. With his future plans, he'd have no problems reaching the White Star, let alone a Black Star that was needed to pass. His star was already bright purple and on the verge of spilling over, so the contribution points didn't interest him.

Since Feng Qing'er and Qing Tan were farther away, it'd take them longer to arrive. As for the Demon army, he didn't care if they got here first. He'd just stall them or use them to practice spatial lock until the other two arrived.

Thinking thus far, Damien began meditating, revolving the Void Essence in his body to hasten his absorption speed tenfold.

And time passed like this.

"Awww~ I thought I'd be first!"

A playful voice woke him from his meditation. When he opened his eyes, he saw Qing Tan standing in front of him with a smile on her face.

"You were fast." He replied blandly, causing her to slightly frown.

"What's with the attitude? Did something hurt your feelings?" She joked.

"Yeah, it did."

“Eh?”

She wasn't expecting such a straight answer from him. She didn't even know how to respond. That is, until he spoke again.

“Sigh, I just realized how weak the Demon Generals are. I want a good fight, but I don't know if I'll get one. If I use this same standard to judge the Commanders, I'm sure to not get one at all.”

Qing Tan's eyes widened. That's what was bothering him?

“Pfft...!”

A short giggle left her mouth, which she quickly suppressed, but in the end, she couldn't control it. Qing Tan was almost rolling on the floor with laughter at such an answer.

‘He's not so different from me.’ She thought inwardly. A thrillseeker, someone who acted because they wanted to have fun. This kind of person was the most interesting.

While the two were chatting, Feng Qing'er also reached their location.

“Dammit! I finished them off so quickly, so why did you two make it here before me?” She muttered with a frown.

“Eh? Isn’t it a distance thing? You were the farthest away from Darknorth. Besides, he can teleport and I can also do something similar, so our movement speeds outstrip yours.”

“Tch.”

Hearing such a logical answer, Feng Qing’er couldn’t find anything to fault. In the end, she could only turn her head to the side and pout.

Naturally, this caused Qing Tan to burst into another fit of laughter.

But Damien couldn’t bring himself to laugh with her, despite the fact that he also found Feng Qing’er’s behavior amusing.

“Why aren’t they here yet?”

By all intents and purposes, the Demon army headed for Darknorth should have arrived already. Not even recently, but long ago.

Damien frowned. Even without his danger sense, it was clear that something was wrong with the current situation.

He spread his awareness to its limit once again, and what he saw made his expression turn ugly.

“Shit...”

The Demon army had come. There was no doubt about it. The problem was, there were no abominations within that army.

What he saw on the horizon was an amalgamation of inky black aura that clouded the heaven and earth. Thousands of Captains, tens of Generals, and three beings that radiated a stronger aura than all of the previous forces combined.

“So the Commanders have finally decided to show themselves.” Qing Tan muttered. It seemed her awareness had also been spread.

“So what if they’re Commanders? Even if they’re stronger than the Generals, they aren’t anything we can’t handle alone.”

But Damien shook his head at her statement. “Sure, if it was only Commanders it’d be an easy fight. But with tens of Generals who will, without a doubt, go out of their way to annoy us during the battle, it gets much trickier.”

“Then can’t we just ask for help from the geniuses within the city?” Qing Tan asked.

Feng Qing’er scoffed. “You saw how useless they were during the battle at Astoria. They were struggling while dealing with 10 Captains, so how do you expect them to deal with Generals?”

“Hm? But these aren’t the same low-rate geniuses that were in Astoria. I mean, sure they won’t compare to the three of us, but the fact that they didn’t cling to your, Miss Queen’s, golden thigh proves that they should have some grit right?”

“Hmm, well it’s not like we have a choice either way. From the way they have their auras blazing before they even got here, and also the fact that they sent exactly 3 Commanders, it’s obvious that we’re their targets. We won’t have time to deal with the small fries.”

“We’ll do what we can. That’s all I can say. If things are looking bad, we run.”

,c-om “There’s a famous scholar by the name of 21 Savage who said these beautiful words: I’d rather be broke in jail than be dead and rich. We can get all the contribution points we want as long as we’re alive.”

“That scholar’s words are wise. We have a similar saying, it’s better to be a living dog than a dead lion. In any case, let’s grab the geniuses within the city. It’s time to prepare for this fight.”

Damien gazed at the horizon with a gleam in his eyes. He had a feeling. A feeling that the fight he was craving was on that horizon, beckoning him.

Damien’s pupils flashed in a blood-red light. His fangs and claws elongated. His battle lust had come out full force in anticipation.

Chapter 277 Racing [1]

It didn’t take long for the forces within Darknorth to congregate at the gates with Damien, Feng Qing’er, and Qing Tan.

Of course, they vehemently opposed at first when they were told about the forces they were up against and their number, but it didn’t take long to change their mind.

Darknorth was in an odd geographical position, situated in a zone where beasts rarely, if ever, roamed, so the surroundings were naturally desolate of contribution points. The geniuses were even completely unaware of the existence of Demons until they were informed of the incoming force.

So these geniuses still had stars that shone bright silver or with a dull yellow hue that indicated they had just recently reached the Golden Star level.

For them, it would take tons of extraneous effort for them to find even a single beast, let alone enough for them to level up their stars. So something like a war, it was a perfect opportunity for them.

None of them wanted to be ejected from the Primordial Undying Realm so early. They would lose out on any sort of treasure at all if they were. As such, their minds were changed in that instant.

Damien didn't know whether to be disgusted at their ability to easily change their faces in the presence of benefits or admiring of the fact that they had the courage to participate in such a large-scale battle at all.

Like this, their original three ballooned until they had a little over fifty geniuses gathered together to face the incoming army.

-com That was around half of the geniuses that had entered the Trial World together. Combined with those that stayed in Astoria, Damien had met 3/4ths of the total number.

As for the remaining 1/4th, they were most likely dead or living in the wilderness while hunting for beasts.

Either way, he didn't really care. Even as his gaze scanned the crowd of geniuses, his face remained passive and indifferent.

He could clearly sense and see the mana emitting from their bodies, and frankly, he wasn't impressed at all.

'These are the ones that are called geniuses?'

He couldn't understand. They were totally average in his eyes, and that was a compliment.

But they couldn't be faulted for appearing like this. Especially since they were being compared with figures like Long Chen, Ruyue, Feng Qing'er, and Qing Tan.

Perhaps it was Damien's mistake due to the type of people he usually associated with, but that didn't change his outlook on the situation. In his mind, he was only being realistic.

'With their levels, they at least shouldn't have a problem with the horde of Demon Captains. If we're lucky, they'll get the chance to team up and hold back the Demon Generals.'

Holding them back. This was the entirety of Damien's expectations for the geniuses in front of him.

Sighing lightly, he briefly looked at Feng Qing'er, who was strongly commanding the geniuses and giving them orders, and Qing Tan, who was happily watching from the side.

When she sensed his gaze, she smiled at him and waved.

‘That girl...truly no sense of propriety.’ He shook his head wryly.

His gaze soon left his own camp and looked towards the Demon army that was speedily approaching. There was only an hour until their clash would begin.

About half a day ago, when Damien, Feng Qing’er, and Qing Tan had just finished defeating their respective Demon armies, a second convening took place within the pantheon at the demon city.

“It was truly a good idea to put the record crystals on those Generals before they moved. We were able to catch an interesting sight.”

“You call that interesting? It’s just a minor matter.”

“Well, I can at least say that there are a few worthy ones among this batch of outsiders.”

“Hmph. Worthy? They aren’t even worthy enough to lick our Lord’s feet. You dare consider them as such?”

“Even we are not worthy of such an action, but our Lord has still allowed us the opportunity. Anyway, enough of that. We did not gather to drown in our own arrogance.”

“Indeed. It seems we must take care of this problem before it becomes a true hindrance for us.”

“A hindrance? How low have you fallen to consider mere kids who can’t see Mount Tai a hindrance?”

The man at the head of the meeting watched his comrades arguing with a passive look on his face. In the end, he decided to speak.

“Sigh, you lot still have a habit of looking down on everything and everyone. Being the absolute beings within this realm for so long had turned you complacent.”

“It isn’t complacency and you know it. We are beings at the peak of 3rd class. Even if we wanted to, there is no more area for us to improve without undergoing Universe Baptism. And due to the restriction, we have been disallowed from doing that.”

“Indeed. Their power cannot compare to us in the slightest. Rather than us underestimating them, I think that you are underestimating us.”

“Enough. Will you take responsibility if they end up becoming a hindrance to our Lord’s plan? Will you dare to speak the same words at that time? We will take care of them now. My words are final.”

“Hah, since when did you get to make that decision? They are just brats. Send a large number of Generals at them and they’ll easily die.”

“You are talking in circles due to your arrogance. If you don’t want to go, then simply don’t. Only three of us need to move.”

“Any volunteers?”

The beings at the table glanced at each other, hesitant to raise their voices. None of them wanted to take on a task that they deigned beneath them. But in the end, three still volunteered.

“Sigh, I’ll go.”

“Me as well.”

“If there’s nobody else, then I’ll go as well.”

The man at the head of the table nodded his head. “Good. Kroa, Winthrop, and Polius will take on the task this time. Gather forces and head out immediately. Also, make sure to take the record crystals with you in case of emergency.”

“Emergency? Do you truly think anything like that will happen this time? Even the three of us are too much to deal with those brats, so gathering a force is also useless.”

“Right. We’ll take care of it and come back with haste.”

“Hmph. Didn’t I say it before? We need to prepare for anything. If you all are forgetting, the Lord told us that there was another entity of equal strength to him in this realm. Or did you all forget such a major detail?”

Indeed. When they were reminded of the fact, their arrogance faltered. If their Lord could lend them his power, who was to say that that entity wouldn't do the same to their enemies?

Other than the fact that it set barriers around the human cities to prevent an easy slaughter, that entity had been silent this whole time, but if they thought about it, it could be due to the fact that the only beings it could support within this realm were mortals without cultivation. Now that powerful individuals had entered, what reason did that entity have to remain passive?

Although they didn't want to admit it, they were no match for such an entity. The three beings begrudgingly took the record crystals they were given and left the great hall.

In another hour, they had already gathered thousands to follow them. And with such a force, they immediately set out towards Darknorth.

Considering that there were only four human cities in this entire region and three had already been attacked, it was too easy to know where their enemy would be.

"Lord! Lord! Something big is happening!"

A panicked voice rang through the study as a maid barged through the door. Judging from her disheveled look, it was clear she rushed in a hurry.

"Oh? Something interesting? Calm down and speak, Trishia."

Although he maintained his indifference, a trace of interest could be seen from within his eyes.

Of the hundreds of servants that occupied his castle along with him, Trishia was one that he knew he could trust.

He had raised her from birth, after all. Even though she wasn't his daughter by blood, his love for her was only slightly below what he had for his own daughter.

But he was a man who learned from his mistakes. Outwardly, he didn't show a hint of emotion towards her, whether it be love or hate.

“Lord, the Apostles have made a move. Three of them are currently gathering a large number of Captains and Generals for unknown purposes. But from the looks of it, they are preparing for war.”

Chapter 278 Racing [2]

“War?”

What could possibly cause the Apostles to move for war? The humane within the realm couldn't cultivate, so they didn't have an opponent that wasn't the Demon Kings themselves.

‘No, the outsiders are here as well.’

But it still didn't entirely make sense to him.

The Apostles were special existences. They could control him due to the corruption that had been forced upon him by their bastard Lord, but their power couldn't match a true 4th class existence in a real fight.

But against a 3rd class? They were nigh invincible. They had reached a level where normal 3rd class existences had not a single chance against them.

So why were they moving? What caused them to do so? Demon King Lucius's mind suddenly moved towards the scene he had witnessed a few days prior.

A storm that had eclipsed the entire Demon army it faced.

'That Stormbringer...if it's them, then it makes more sense for an Apostle to move.'

But even then, there should only be a single Apostle acting. For three to move was begging overkill even for someone as powerful as that Stormbringer.

'Then, are there more than have similar power to him?'

If it was like that, then things started to make more sense. Still, three Apostles, this seemed like a chance unlike any he had gotten in many thousands of years.

'My daughter...'

Worry coated his face once more as he thought of her. Although he still wasn't able to re-establish the mark he had placed on her, he knew she was alive. His intuition was telling him so.

And the intuition of a 4th class existence wasn't something that could be thrown away as a mere feeling or speculation.

'If she's alive, then she has to be in the hands of that Stormbringer.'

It was the only logical conclusion. The Stormbringer was the most powerful of the outsiders that had been present at the battle his daughter had taken part in, so her being in his possession wasn't a far-reaching thought.

If it was him in that situation, he would've taken the most powerful of the enemy forces and tortured them for information. Was there any other course of action more fitting?

The thought of his daughter being tortured brought him endless pain, but he knew he couldn't direct his anger at the Stormbringer. As he was in the same situation at one point in time, he couldn't fault the other party's actions.

If it was him, he'd have long since killed the enemy after they lost their use.

And the Stormbringer seemed to be someone who could become a valuable ally to him. Since his daughter was alive, he could at least be grateful for this much and put down his personal grudge for the sake of long-term benefits.

He could only hope that she wasn't too distraught or damaged.

‘Forgive me, my daughter. I hope you can understand that I’m doing this for the sake of our future.’

Demon King Lucius organized his thoughts before turning his attention back to Trishia.

“Gather our personal forces and send a group of Generals to aid the Apostles’ expedition. Pass my orders down. A storm can become a valuable ally if one can navigate it properly.”

Trishia bowed to the Demon King once again and hurriedly left his office.

Not even ten minutes, she returned to report the completion of her task.

Demon King Lucius watched the army that was leaving the demon city from the window in his study. His expression remained unreadable even then.

There was only half an hour until the enhanced Demon army was projected to reach their location, but Damien had suddenly vanished from sight.

If it wasn’t for the fact that he had already told Feng Qing’er and Qing Tan that he was leaving to prepare something, panic would have spread through their camp.

After all, he was expected to deal with one of the three most powerful arriving beings along with the two women, so his presence was incredibly important to their coming battle.

As the Demon Army continued to get closer to them, Damien began to feel a sense of foreboding that wasn't present before. He felt that something out of his control would happen, and this feeling quickly quelled the reckless battle lust that was threatening to consume him.

Due to this foreboding feeling, Damien decided to grab a final card that he wasn't planning to take yet. He wanted to complete the process at a later date.

But now, he was back in the Sanctuary, looking at the haggard figure of a woman on the ground.

She hadn't been fed anything for the past day that she had been confined here, so it was only natural for her condition to deteriorate. And although Damien knew it was cruel, this was the best treatment he could offer to an enemy.

At least he hadn't killed her.

Elitra's eyes were still dull, as if she had already ended her life, but Damien could still feel the life force within her body.

'Her battle with the Nihilicity Flame probably worsened.'

It was only natural considering her condition. The flame was probably much closer to winning and consuming her than it ever had been before.

But that wouldn't last much longer. The final card Damien wanted was this flame itself.

Ranked 23rd on the Heavenly Flame Index. In his hands, he knew this flame could become an extremely powerful tool.

He wanted to steal it from the Demon Kings, since their Nihility Flames were bound to be more powerful, but for now, he'd settle for hers. He could always consume more in the future.

Without talking to Elitra at all or even acknowledging her, Damien put his hand on her shoulder and inserted his low-level Void Essence into her body.

Quickly circulating it, he found the Nihility Flames raging throughout as if it was a wolf and untameable bull.

'It seems she wasn't lying about burning alive every day.'

Feeling some pity for her, he used his Void Essence to wrap around the rampaging flames and congeal them at a single point.

Although they tried to resist, what was the point? Even the most powerful of manas were nothing in front of the Void.

The raging flame quickly became docile and formed a ball at Elitra's chest before shooting up her throat and out of her mouth.

“Kuk...kuk!”

A fit of coughs left her mouth as the clump of black flames exited. Soon after, they obediently entered Damien’s body.

The Nihility Flame spread through his body the same way it did with Elitra, the only difference being its attitude. The flame fused with his muscles and bones, empowering them. It mingled with his black lighting as if they were close friends

.

Even under the fear of Void Essence, it was acting cozier than he expected. But he didn’t have time to question it.

Sensing the disappearance of the constant pain that had been racking her body for as long as she could remember, some light entered Elitra’s eyes again.

Her weary gaze landed on Damien, who was curiously playing with the obedient Nihility Flame between his fingers.

The light in Elitra’s eyes brightened once more at the sight. Something in her mind seemed to click.

“L-Lord.”

Her voice was hoarse, but she still managed to force it out.

“What?” Damien looked at her in shock.

“Lord.”

She said it with much more confidence the second time.

“Why the hell am I your Lord?”

“You who has tamed the Nihility Flame. The one who saved me from endless torment. Only you are worthy of being my Lord.”

As she spoke, her eyes seemed to shine. The restriction that stopped her from speaking certain words had been entirely lifted in the mysterious space she was now in.

It only made her want to worship Damien as her Lord even more. The fact that he was only a 3rd class like her, yet was able to accomplish something that even her father couldn't do. It made her body feel a tingling sensation she had never felt before.

“You're aware that I tortured you like a day ago right? Isn't your attitude change too sudden?”

Damien was baffled. He couldn't understand her at all. He even thought she was trying to make a ploy for revenge. But her eyes were so clear and her emotions so thick that he couldn't immediately say she was fooling him.

Elitra didn't seem to register his words at all, though. She lowered her body until she was in a kowtow position and placed her head on the ground.

"If my Lord wishes to punish me, this lowly servant doesn't dare to resist. Please accept me, Lord."

'What the hell?'

Damien wanted to understand what was happening, but he once again realized how limited his time was.

"Sigh, I'll deal with you later. Obediently stay here and wait."

"Yes, My Lord!"

Bothered by her enthusiasm, Damien ended up leaving a pile of food and water in the confinement area so her condition would slightly improve.

Her mana was still sealed and she no longer had legs, so he didn't have any reason to deem her a threat anyway.

"Do you truly expect us to wait for another ant to show up? Did you think you would be granted privileges or something?"

When Damien reappeared in the Trial World, he was greeted by the scene of the Demon army already in confrontation with the assembled geniuses.

The Commander at the forefront of the force stood in the air with a high and mighty look on her face, mocking the geniuses.

“Ha? Special treatment? As if you deserve to say something like that. Ugly bitch, come let this big sister teach you a lesson!”

And Feng Qing'er was standing in front of her with a similarly proud look on her face. The atmosphere was already heated on the verge of exploding.

Damien smiled wryly at the scene.

‘Well, at least I’m not too late, I guess.’

Chapter 279 Racing [3]

The chosen location of the battle was actually relatively far from Darknorth. With the clash of so many forces with a much greater average power level than the ones from previous battles, it was obvious that the collateral damage would be far greater.

Feng Qing'er didn't want to take any risks. Even though she was aware of the barrier that protected Darknorth and the rest of the cities, she didn't want to put her trust into something she couldn't control.

That's why she had the geniuses travel away from the city to meet the incoming army halfway.

Of course, Damien had already left for the Sanctuary by the time the procession began, but for some reason, he had landed in the midst of the crowd of geniuses when he arrived back in the Primordial Undying Realm.

He was confused by the fact, sure, but judging by the current situation, he didn't have any time to dwell on it. Battle was already on the verge of erupting.

At this close proximity, the difference in scale between the two sides became even more obvious. In front of the thousand-strong army, the coalition of geniuses looked like nothing more than an ant in front of an elephant.

But the clash of auras was entirely different. Although the geniuses were still on the losing side, the difference wasn't as drastic as the sheer numbers difference made it seem.

If Damien released his full aura in addition to the tide of aura that was already being supported by Feng Qing'er and Qing Tan's massive presences, he didn't think they'd be losing out by much.

This scene made Damien a bit more hopeful for the soon-to-start battle.

"Wasn't there supposed to be three of you at the head? That handsome man I saw on the record crystal, where did he go? Don't tell me he ran away after seeing our numbers?"

"Hmph, what do you know? Why would anyone run away from this army of ants? Did you never stop to consider the fact that he simply doesn't think you're worthy enough for him to show up all punctual?"

Damien raised his brow at her words. This Feng Qing'er who always tried her best to pick a fight with him was actually making him seem so lofty in front of the enemy? He thought he might have to change his opinion of her.

Judging that it'd be a fun time to pour fuel on the fire, Damien began to push his way through the crowd.

"Ah, excuse me, excuse me, coming through! Hey, which one of you assholes is touching my ass? I don't swing that way!"

A small commotion erupted as he roughly made his way towards the front of the crowd. He intentionally roughed his hair up a bit to make himself look sleazier than he usually did.

、 When he reached the front, he ignored the stares of the Demon army and the Commanders and made his way into the air next to Feng Qing'er.

"Yo! Something interesting happening?"

Feng Qing'er smirked when she realized what he was doing. "No, nothing much. Just an ugly bitch and her entourage trying to act high and mighty. Anyway, where have you been?"

"Eh? I just woke up from a nap. The accommodations in Darknorth are actually really nice. The ambiance is lovely as well." Damien spoke while yawning and stretching his body.

“Oho? I’ll have to go check it out after we clean up here. Because of a certain pest, I wasn’t able to even get a good look at the city.”

Swoosh!

Both of them suddenly moved their bodies to the side slightly as a black bullet shot past them.

“You dare ignore me?!” The female Demon Commander growled with annoyance plastered on her face.

“Who’s this?”

“Didn’t I tell you just now? She’s an ugly bitch.”

Damien fondled his chin with the face of a wise sage as he scanned the Demon Commander from head to toe.

“Face, 3. Body, a solid 5. Her personality seems to be a 1 though. Overall, a hard pass.”

“Pfft!”

Even the geniuses behind him almost failed to hold back their laughter. She wasn’t that bad, was she? Even though she’s an enemy, did you really have to stomp her dignity like that?

The Demon Commander was truly on the average side when compared to beauties like Feng Qing'er and Qing Tan, but if she was put in the middle of a crowd of normal women, she still had looks that were bound to stand out.

The female Demon Commander's face quickly became cold when she heard his words. Truth be told, her appearance had always been a sore spot for her.

Due to the continuous infusion of mana as they leveled up, cultivators would become more and more beautiful. Natural-born beauties like Ruyue would become heaven toppling with time, to the point where even Gods would fawn over them.

But Kroa, the Demon Commander, wasn't blessed with natural beauty. Even after becoming so powerful and leveling up to such a point, she was only slightly above average. Seeing beautiful women like Elitra always made her feel inferior, regardless of her status among demons.

"Enough talk. It's better if we get our job done and head back."

Kroa didn't continue with her arrogant show. Funnily enough, instead of targeting Damien; who had touched her sore spot, her attention was focused on Feng Qing'er herself. Intense envy and murderous intent filled her gaze.

Suddenly, two new figures appeared at her side.

"Sigh, this is why it's a bad thing to provoke Kroa. Don't they know that touching her reverse scale leads to a fate worse than death?"

“And how were they supposed to know that? Well, they were fated to die anyway, it’s just a shame that their deaths won’t be quick any longer.”

The two men casually chatted as they sized up Damien and Qing Tan respectively.

“Which one do you want?”

“Does that matter? You take left and I take right.”

“Sure, sure.”

The man who headed left was the one named Winthrop, his gaze lecherously scanning Qing Tan’s body. As for the man named Polius, he casually stood before Damien.

Throughout the whole interaction, the geniuses behind them kept silent. Even while laughing at Damien’s jokes, they were already aware of the gravity of the situation.

Some of them even thought to turn back and flee at that moment, but it was already too late. If they fled now, their deaths would only be hastened.

Even Damien, Feng Qing’er, and Qing Tan were aware that they were fighting an uphill battle. But this fact only served to heighten their fighting intent.

After all, they had all already experienced the might of the Generals. It had given them a certain amount of confidence when facing the Commanders.

The three leaders of each side stood in the air facing each other, and the lower forces were doing the same on the ground.

In such a situation, one would expect a certain trigger to be the start of the fierce battle. Perhaps it'd be one side falling to provocation, or some other situation that slowly caused things to escalate.

But none of that was present.

The second the booming sound of rapid movement filled the sky, the troops on the ground moved as well.

The atmosphere soon became filled with the sound of clashing blades.

Chapter 280 Racing [4]

Boom!

Damien's figure became a blur as he shot through the air and arrived in front of Polius. His fist carried the speed of a bullet and the force of a cannon as it drove towards the latter.

Polius shifted his body, causing the punch to brush past his face as his palm shot forward to impact Damien's left hand, which had already begun his follow-up.

Swoosh!

A fierce kick sliced through the air towards Damien's ribs, forcing him to twist his body to dodge. Instead of trying to attack again from his awkward position, Damien used the twist to build momentum, doing a full 360 and launching his own kick forward.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The sounds of impacts layered over each other as both Damien and Polius dodged and counterattacked each other's blows. Within a single second, tens, if not hundreds, of exchanges had already taken place:

"Not bad. Unrefined, but still not bad."

Polius casually commented while offsetting the force of another mana-infused punch. But Damien wasn't bothered by his demeanor.

After all, the two of them hadn't really started fighting yet. He knew very well that they were just probing strength at the moment.

And Damien had already realized by now how wrong he had been in his previous assumptions. With the level of the Demon Generals, even the brief probing exchange that had already taken place would have been enough to injure them.

But Polius was just as casual as Damien. In fact, he might've been even more casual considering how he hadn't even tried to take the initiative yet.

"Alright. I've tasted enough of your punches. Try some of mine now."

Poliuss aura became aggressive in that moment. His eyes turned sharp as they hadn't been before.

Boom!

He kicked forward, his foot impacting the arms Damien had raised to block. But he didn't pull away. He put more force into his foot, infusing it with mana and blowing Damien back.

Damien's body shot back like a comet. Even though he hadn't taken damage, he still had to mitigate the momentum of the kick. Damiens mana immediately spread into the atmosphere, harnessing the surrounding vectors to abruptly stop his body without taking much damage.

And he was just in time to see a fist in front of his face.

Boom!

Damien wasn't able to block the punch, but since he was already controlling the surrounding vectors, he was able to slow its movement slightly. With that gained time, he slightly turned his head so the punch hit his cheek instead of his nose.

His neck snapped to the side. Alarm bells rang in his head. In that instant, he decided to stop playing around.

His figure flashed, appearing a meter away right as a heavy axe kick loaded with inky black mana passed through his previous position.

It looked like Polius also wasn't messing around anymore.

Their first round was close combat without the use of skills or equipment, and Damien had come out with a loss.

He could blame it on the fact that he had spent most of his time on sword training instead of hand-to-hand combat, but he had no interest in excuses.

Since he had decided to abandon the sword, it was his fault and his fault alone that his skills weren't enough to match up to Polius.

Damien's arm flickered out of existence, becoming ethereal for a second as he used a move he had neglected for a while.

'Void Sword Art First Form: Bladeless'

For the first time, Polius felt a slight alarm bell in his head. He poured mana into his legs and hurriedly kicked to the side, narrowly avoiding a massive spatial fissure that appeared out of nowhere.

When he looked at Damien, he realized that the young man had a sword in his hand that wasn't there prior. His legs were bent and his arm was pulled back as if he was holding a bow.

'Void Sword Art Second Form: Horizon Break'

Boom’

A hole was punctured in the space that Polius occupied, trying to force its way past the boundaries of distance and pierce his heart.

Not even waiting to see whether his attack had bore results, Damien’s figure flashed and became ethereal. Dozens of phantom clones of himself appeared in the air and shimmered as if they were made of dewdrops.

‘Void Sword Art Third Form: Dance of the Void’

The myriad phantoms of Damien’s figure surrounded Polius and let out a string of attacks, fluidly switching between Bladeless, Horizon Break, and normal sword intent infused slashes that colored the atmosphere.

The air was filled with space cracks and punctures as if it was a sheet of paper that had been bullied by a small child. And within that space was Polius.

He moved swiftly, his mana acting like a living entity and pulling him out of the way of every attack Damien threw.

His eyes darted around looking for an opening to counter, but Damien had no intention of giving him one. Since this opponent was someone he couldn’t defeat by simply abusing the power difference, he was going to abuse his mana capacity and speed instead.

Boom! Boom!

Two Phantom Damien's slashed their swords at the same time, causing two massive fissures from bladeless to cut off Polius's escape routes to his sides.

At the same time, two more phantoms appeared in front and behind him, stabbing their swords like rapiers and unleashing Horizon Break to puncture their opponent's heart.

In that instant, the true Damien took the opportunity he had been looking for. He infused a greater portion of mana into his sword than he did previously and used the vectors in the atmosphere to increase the gravity surrounding him.

With all the built-up momentum, he heavily smashed his sword down, causing a massive boom to ring out in the surroundings.

‘Void Sword Art Fourth Form: Spatial Collapse’

Crack!

The encirclement of spatial fissures and punctures suddenly burst as the space they encompassed cracked like glass.

The scenes of shards of space itself falling to the ground like flower petals caused an odd sense of incongruity that served to confuse people who couldn't fathom the phenomenon, but it wasn't even worthy of being an appetizer for what was to come.

As space continued to crack, heaven and earth twisted madly as if they were being toyed with by a god. The sky and ground became one entity with no separation, and all creation within began to fuse and rupture simultaneously.

The dichotomy of phenomena in the atmosphere around him put immense pressure on Polius's body, threatening to rupture and fuse him into its being.

‘Void Sword Art Fifth Form’

It was at that moment when Polius began to madly push his mana to resist the pressuring of the atmosphere that Damien decided to use something he hadn't even tested practically before.

The sword in his hand started to vibrate at extreme speeds, causing the air around it to screech. Even though the weapon had devoured an Ancient Sword from Apeiron and reached the peak of SSS rank, cracks began to emerge on its surface.

Crackle!

Ferocious black lightning shot out of Damien's arm and infused into the blade, putting further strain on the weapon. Without any care for its state, bright golden sunflames also shot out and wreathed the blade's surface.

Space began to distort around the weapon and compress, causing the wildly dancing flames and lightning to be compacted into the blade as if they were mere coatings of paint.

Damien's will extended into the environment and forcefully took control of the surrounding vectors. This time, he was using their abilities for amplification. Coupled with the innate amplification effect of the sword itself, a truly frightening aura of death began to emit from it.

And as if to put the cherry on top, Damien poured a sliver of low-level Void Essence into the mixture.

That was it. The sword could no longer bear the weight of everything Damien stacked on top of it.

As the foundation of the weapon began to crumble, Damien swung it for the final time.

It was a clean arc, beautiful to the point where everything froze as if the universe was holding its breath as it watched Damien's movements.

It must've been the most beautiful sword move he had ever performed to date. The skillful execution that allowed the blade to stay intact even as it had already started to crumble. This single slash was the epitome of what Damien had achieved during those years that he unceasingly trained his sword.

And as that vertical slash finished its path, as the sword in Damien's hand had scattered into ash, a thin black line cut the entire world in half.

The surrounding light was sucked into the slash, making it seem like everything else was unimportant under its luster.

And before even an instant could pass, it reached its destination.

‘Dimensional Severance’