

# Void 311

## Chapter 311 Voice [1]

Although Damien wanted to celebrate his successful escape, he was well aware that leaving the barrier didn't guarantee his safety.

As if to prove his assessment, two divine senses swept over his position before the gap in the barrier could fully close.

"Boy, don't think that we are your most powerful enemy here. Your true enemy is waiting for you out there."

"I didn't expect to be able to see such a fun show in this lifetime. Since you've given us some quality entertainment for the first time in 10,000 years, me and Old Eden here didn't interfere when you fought that witch. However, next time we meet we'll likely be enemies. Let's see if you can show me another good thing at that time."

The first voice was effeminate yet not womanly, making Damien unsure of the individual's gender. As for the second, it was the husky voice of a man.

'Demon Kings Granheim and Eden.'

Damien was sure of their identities, leaving the Demon Queen he had just escaped from as Demon King Eliza. According to what he learned from Elitra, she was more powerful than both Granheim and Lucius, while being less powerful than Eden, but Damien didn't think so.

‘Her mental magic is truly fierce. If it wasn’t for the Mind Prison, no matter how much willpower I have, I wouldn’t be able to resist. What about others?’

Damien realized why the assessment was such. Her mental magic was indeed powerful. Damien also realized that Eliza might not have used the full potential of her mental magic in their bout just now.

‘Luckily I riled her up a ton before the fight actually started. If she was thinking straight, I don’t know how I would’ve been able to continue casting with ease.’

Her mental state was already a mess after he brought her to climax through humiliation, and it became even more messed as she faced even more humiliation from not being able to catch him.

The best way to deal with someone who used mental attacks was to disrupt their mind. Damien had figured this out at the moment.

‘But those two divine senses...’

They were far more powerful than Damien could fathom. If they had chosen to interfere in today’s matter, he might not have been able to escape as he had done.

While he was thinking, Damien never stopped moving forward, rushing through the outskirts of the mountain’s fourth layer to escape. Feng Qing’er and Qing Tan were on his right and left, following not far behind him.

“There are probably going to be Apostles blocking our exit. Be prepared to fight.” Damien mentioned to the other two.

“Isn’t that obvious? Don’t get in the habit of telling me what to do.” Feng Qing’er scoffed.

“More fun~!” Meanwhile, Qing Tan was just excited to be taking part in the current chaos.

The three ran for a few more minutes before they met with the inevitable obstruction. Rather than just sending three Apostles as they had done before, all 7 of the remaining Apostles were blocking the path ahead.

Damien abruptly halted in his steps. “Damn, you guys really went all out this time.”

His gaze was focused on the old man that stood in the middle. Even disregarding his position, the way the other Apostles showed subconscious deference to him made his position obvious.

“Little brat, you’ve truly gone out of your way to make our lives hard in these past few months, haven’t you?” The old man said, ignoring Damien’s previous comment.

“Hm? What could you possibly be talking about?” Damien responded.

“Well, it’s not like it matters. Our plans aren’t something a measly child like you can interfere with. Perhaps soon you’ll understand how futile your efforts have been, and at that time, maybe you’ll regret not becoming a part of such a grand revolution.”

Damien’s brow twitched when the old man kept talking while ignoring him. Even his eyes were foggy as if he wasn’t actually looking at Damien at all.

“Sigh, enough of all this talking. You came to fight us, so let’s fight. Look, those six behind you look like they’re itching to be taught a lesson.”

As Damien said, the other six Apostles were glaring daggers at the group of three as if their families had just been slaughtered in front of them.

“What’s with the hatred~? I’ve never met any of you before.” Qing Tan asked lightly. Even Damien and Feng Qing’er were curious about this point.

The Apostles continued silently glaring while the old man smiled. “Forgive them. You see, the ten of them share a connection similar to siblings considering our positions and inheritance. If three of your siblings were killed, wouldn’t you also bear intense hatred for their killers?”

“But you, old man, don’t seem to bear any hatred at all. Could it be that you’re the type to backstab friends and family for profit? To be honest, it’s not surprising at all.”

The old man continued smiling as if Damien’s words didn’t affect him at all. “You don’t have to try and sow discord between us. They can understand my motives just as clearly as I can understand theirs. Nothing is hidden between us.”

“Tch.”

Damien’s sharp gaze panned the surroundings as his awareness stayed spread through the area.

‘There’s no way the three of us can fight the seven of them on equal footing.’

Since they had encountered the group of Apostles, Damien’s goal had always been to escape. He never once entertained the thought of fighting. But there was definitely a certain thought hovering in his mind.

‘Looking at how they all defer to that old man, if I can just take him out, then their morale will take a huge hit.’

Damien had been wondering how to attract the Apostles for his assassination plan for a while, but he couldn’t find a way to provoke them into moving. He didn’t know enough about them to do so.

Previously, they had come because he was interfering with their plans too much, but after three of them had been killed, it would be much harder to use the same method to draw them out. They were undoubtedly wary, proven by the fact that they mobilized together instead of sending a small number.

‘But, even with numbers, they can’t combat Void Essence.’

Damien's awareness became focused as he sent a mental message to Feng Qing'er and Qing Tan.

'Can the two of you hold them off for a while?'

Feng Qing'er furrowed her brows. 'Do you have a plan?'

'I do, but I need absolute concentration to pull it off. If any of them manage to interrupt me, it won't work.'

'Hmm, there's seven of them and two of us. It's almost impossible for us to win this battle.' Qing Tan added.

'Right, I don't plan to kill them all. Just buy me five minutes, and then escape with everything you have. Even if I don't act after five minutes, you should still escape.'

'Understood. Five minutes, right? Even if you wanted five hours, I could easily buy that much time!' Feng Qing'er proudly thumped her chest and proclaimed.

Damien grinned at her confidence. 'Good! As expected of the future Matriarch of the Fire Phoenix Clan! Well then, let's begin!'

On his cue, a sea of flaming runic patterns and a swamp of darkness filled the surrounding area. Soon enough, a massive battle abruptly began.

Chapter 312 Voice [2]

Feng Qing'er and Qing Tan shot forward like two bullets, moving faster than the eye could see. Behind Feng Qing'er, many runic patterns formed and dispersed in the air to create something greater while behind Qing Tan, an ever-expanding swamp of darkness consumed the land.

Shadow Generals and Captains were useless in this battle, so they weren't summoned to act arbitrarily. Even as distractions they didn't have much use. Instead, Qing Tan directly summoned three beings that hadn't seen the light of day yet.

One was a man who stood 6 feet in height and had an imposing demeanor. His facial features were masked in shadows and he was wearing a pitch black armor set that covered his body. However, his aura still remained similar to the one he had when he was alive.

"Winthrop!"

"You conniving bitch!"

Surprised exclamations came from the Apostles who had remained silent thus far. They couldn't maintain the same demeanor when they saw the shadow of their fallen comrade return to oppose them.

"Ohh~ that's right! You know this guy! Mm, he's a new addition so he hadn't seen much combat yet. Treat him well, okay?" Qing Tan said teasingly as she continued forward.

Behind the fallen Demon Commander, there were two massive beasts, one in the form of a strange bird and the other similar to a rhino. Both had similar levels of power to the Demon Commander.

The three Shadow Commanders closely followed Qing Tan's movements like loyal guards, separating only when they arrived in front of the enemy. Each of them occupied an Apostle while Qing Tan stayed in the rear and observed the overall situation.

On Feng Qing'er's side, there were no helpers or summons. Instead, the swirling flame runes in the sky seemed to have gained life of their own as they danced around the Apostles.

"Little girl, I've seen you before. Do you think these paltry tricks will work on us?" One of the Apostles sneered.

She moved her arms in a specific pattern, causing the dark material surrounding her to swirl and take shape as runes of its own. When these runes impacted the flaming patterns, both sides immediately dispersed.

The remaining Apostles that Feng Qing'er made similar maneuvers, easily dispelling the runic patterns around them. However, the second they did, they found another wave of runes eclipsing them again.

"Hahaha, it's just like he said, you guys gained a ton of information because of my mistake. Well, did you think I waited a month to attack because I was scared? Naturally, I've made sure that things will be incredibly difficult for you regardless."



As Feng Qing'er spoke, her fingers danced like the hands of a conductor, drawing out more and more runes with her mana. The sky had already been filled with thousands of flaming patterns that resembled the gait of a Phoenix.

"This time, all I have to do is hold you back. Do you think I won't be able to?" With a mocking grin, Feng Qing'er charged into the fray, followed by an array of runes and Phoenix phantoms.

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While the two battles raged, Damien teleported far away from the commotion and closed his eyes. His body soon became ethereal and merged with the space around him.

He wasn't using mana to do so, no, his natural affinity with space made it so that he could perfectly incorporate it with concentration alone. The caveat was that if he made any movement or broke his concentration, he would immediately rematerialize.

With his eyes closed, Damien's consciousness entered a whole new world. Even when he wasn't focusing, his unique breadth of vision as a spatial expert allowed him to view the world through spatial layers, but in his current state, he had surpassed that.

The spatial layers he usually saw were like layers of film or cloth that were endlessly stacked on top of each other, flowing like waves while being sturdy as diamond. It was an interesting perspective on the world that'd make any normal person's brain split just by viewing it.

But for a spatial expert, this was just normal. But rather than this normal, what Damien currently saw with his awareness was a world of endless darkness that seemed to consume everything.

There was a saying that said where there was light, there would inevitably be darkness. The relationship between space and the void was similar.

In fact, in certain veins of thought, the void could be considered a sub-concept of space. But this void was different than the one that gave Damien's physique its namesake.

While it carried similar properties, it was at an even lower level than Damien's Low-Level Void Essence. It was like a snake while the Void was a dragon.

But regardless, a snake was still a descendant of dragons. It had the potential to become a dragon if it had the aptitude and willpower to work for it.

When Damien's consciousness sunk into the void, he directly used it as a medium to communicate with the true Void, seeping his Low-Level Void Essence into it and creating a channel.

This method was far more roundabout than what he did when he first created his Sanctuary, but this method also had a far greater chance of success.

During the creation of the Sanctuary, it was the massive country-sized portion of overlapped space that caused the foundation of the area to shake and open a thumb-sized crack into the Void, but Damien couldn't easily replicate such a situation. It could be said that his first encounter with the Void was due to pure luck.

So, when Damien worked to establish a true stable connection this time, he did it differently. Damien sat within the void and meditated on that connection like an old monk, silently drawing power from it and trying to manifest it into the real world.

He didn't need much. Even a thumb-sized portion of High-Level Void Essence would be enough to quickly and quietly assassinate a Demon King, let alone an Apostle. He at least needed Mid-Level Void Essence to accomplish his current task.

But as he continued attempting to draw Void Essence above his comprehension level into his body, he soon realized that it was impossible.

Borrowing the power of Mid-Level Void Essence was something he could do, but his body simply couldn't bear the strain of such a task yet. Perhaps even his Half-Dragon body couldn't bear the weight.

But there was an easy solution to this.

'Demon Dragon Transformation.'

He called out the chant in his head, and his bloodlines answered immediately. His body went through heavy changes, taking on his Demonic Dragon Form.

At that moment, he finally obtained the capital to contain some Mid-Level Void Essence in his vessel. But he still didn't have the comprehension level to do so permanently. Even as the Mid-Level Void

Essence entered his body, he felt that it would only stay there for a few seconds before it started to disperse.

‘Well, my body can only remain like this for half a minute, anyway, so a few seconds is solid.’

Damien opened his eyes to be greeted by a chaotic battlefield of flames and darkness. Dark material flared through the area and combatted the combined forces of Feng Qing’er and Qing Tan.

It didn’t take long for Damien to grasp the situation.

‘If Qing Tan didn’t have those shadows, they would’ve been done in already.’

But there were no what-ifs in this world. What mattered was that Feng Qing’er and Qing Tan had successfully bought him the time he needed.

Damien didn’t let his thoughts simmer for too long. He moved his mana to keep him assimilated into the space around him while also using vector control to make sure the spatial fluctuations didn’t spread into the surroundings.

He rapidly crossed the chaotic battlefield without being noticed by anyone and finally caught sight of his target.

The old man was still standing in his previous spot, watching the ongoing battle with a light smile on his face. Even as he saw his so-called brothers and sisters get injured, he didn't seem in a hurry to make a move.

Damien felt there was something off about this old man's demeanor. He had felt the same uncomfortable sensation since the moment he laid eyes on him. But he didn't have time to dwell on it. His Demon Dragon Form wouldn't last long enough.

20 seconds.

Damien arrived in the old man's vicinity, slowing his pace and steadying his breathing.

15 seconds.

Damien had become invisible. Not only his bodily functions, even his life aura and mana fluctuations had diminished until they were unnoticeable even if he came out of the void.

10 seconds.

Damien arrived behind the old man who still didn't move an inch. Seeing that smile up close, the uncomfortable feeling in Damien's chest grew even fiercer.

8 seconds.

The Mid-Level Void Essence he had been temporarily housing appeared on the tips of his fingers, causing the surrounding space to crack. He could no longer remain concealed as he had before.

7 seconds.

Damien's hand shot forward and plunged into the old man's chest without resistance. The Void Essence on his palm spread through the old man's body, causing it to rot and become nonexistent.

6 seconds.

The old man finally turned his head to look at Damien. Even as his body crumbled into nothingness, the smile on his face never faded. When Damien met the old man's eyes, he noticed that they were like hollow black holes, seemingly not containing any consciousness behind them.

5 seconds.

The old man's body no longer existed, his head floated in space as his neck slowly faded. Suddenly, that eerie smile widened into a wicked grin. Damien froze. He felt a chill like nothing he had ever felt before.

4 seconds.

Damien couldn't move. He couldn't think. His mind was completely occupied with the deranged grin of the old man in front of him. His mana became sluggish, his life aura waned. It was like Damien had suddenly begun dying.

3 seconds.

The old man's head had already started being banished into nothingness. The Void Essence that wreaked havoc in his body was also starting to disappear.

2 seconds.

Damien was at the end of his rope. Originally, he didn't plan to stay for so long. He wanted to retreat immediately after striking his blow, but now, he was stuck here, unable to move. Time seemed to come to a halt, with only Damien and the disappearing remains of the old man left in the world.

1 second.

"....."

The old man finally spoke. The old man didn't have a mouth nor a throat to create sound from, and Damien couldn't even make out the words the old man said, but for some reason, he could understand them clearly.

The voice he heard was unfathomable and malevolent, causing Damien to experience a visceral fear that he had never experienced before. Just by listening to it, Damien felt his life force wither until it reached the point where his natural lifespan was only a few months long.

0 seconds.

Damien's Demon Dragon Transformation ended, time sped up until it was flowing normally again, the old man's figure completely vanished from existence.

Damien immediately collapsed to the ground. His body was wracked with insane pain that he couldn't understand and his mind was in shambles. Mouthfuls of blood continuously flowed from his mouth without pause.

Damien's chaotic mind raced, but he was unable to form a single thought. He couldn't even consciously register the pain that he was supposed to be experiencing.

He had no idea what the surrounding situation was. He had no idea where his body was or what was happening to it. He was trapped inside his mind space with a single image playing on replay over and over again.

It was the image of that malevolent smile and the sound of that unfathomable voice. Under the stimulation of these two factors, Damien was slowly losing his mind, unable to stop it from crumbling to dust.

Chapter 313 Death's Door [1]



“Old Ghost, you dare?!”

A furious bellow rang out within an unknown location filled with darkness. The voice was hoarse and weary, but the domineering intent behind its words was unquestionable.

“Kekeke, so what if I do? Old Fool, it’s your fault for not managing him properly. Did you think I didn’t know anything?”

A malevolent voice responded in kind, not shirking at all in the face of the intense pressure the first voice gave off. In fact, the second voice seemed to fully enjoy the first’s rage.

“Old Ghost, it seems I’ve been too lenient with you over these past few millennia. You seem to think you can do as you please here. Very well, if you think that you can interfere without consequence, then allow me to remind you of your place.”

The endless darkness trembled in fear. A massive aura spread from an unknown location within, causing cracks to appear within the mysterious realm that the two voices inhabited.

“Old Fool, are you crazy?!”

“Do you have the right to call anyone crazy? It is your actions that forced me to do this. As for the consequences, hehehe, I’ll kindly allow you to bear them along with me.”

“Tch! This is why I call you an Old Fool! Don’t you know? Regardless of what you were in the past, you are only a husk of your former self. If you truly think you can harm me like this, then you need to face reality!”

“Hahahaha! Old Ghost, you are too naive! Well then, allow me to show you reality!”

As the massive aura continued to spread, greenish-white motes of light began to pollute the endless darkness. As these droplets of light fell to the incorporeal ground, they rapidly spread and consumed it.

The endless darkness took on a new look, with a large portion of it now being the same greenish-white color. In the place where this light clashed with the darkness, massive ruptures of space the size of continents formed and dissipated constantly, causing severe instability in the realm.

“So you were still hiding this much power from me. Old Fool, it seems you want to end things here! Then, this King shall accompany you!”

Another massive aura billowed in the mysterious realm, spurring the endless darkness into action.

The two beings fought only with their auras, but the damage they were causing had already reached a continental scale. They knew that if they moved to truly fight, they’d end up consumed by the void once the mysterious realm collapsed.

Suddenly, a rain of greenish-white light motes rushed into a newly opened space crack before it closed.

“So this was your plan all along!”

The one called Old Ghost exclaimed in frustration. He had been too rash, wanting to get rid of his old rival once and for all. He had forgotten what the original cause of their current dispute was.

“What? If you can interfere, why can’t I? Isn’t it only fair?”

The one called Old Fool mocked his enemy. Soon after, both auras gradually diminished as peace once again returned to the mysterious realm.

The greenish-white land that had been formed didn’t disappear, though. It stood strong like a sole Holy Land that could weather the winds and rain within hell.

“Old Fool, you best pray that this one can survive a bit longer than the rest. Although you may have stopped this King’s advances in your first trial, the second one is something you cannot interfere with any more than you already have. Kekeke, even if he has the mental strength to resist that little girl, it won’t mean anything in the face of his own demons.”

“Hmph. Whether or not he can survive is up to him. If he truly falls, then he simply wasn’t worthy enough. No matter how long it takes, I’ll always wait until the right one comes around. At that time, regardless of what interference you pull, nothing will stop their rise.”

“Kekeke! Old Fool, you don’t have to talk in circles with me. Just as you know certain things, I naturally know them as well. This time...”

“Enough!”

Old Fool didn't let Old Ghost finish speaking. He was well aware of the current situation, but if he allowed the hope in his heart to diminish, he'd truly have nothing left.

His gaze seemed to pierce through the veil of reality for a moment as he looked at the figure of a certain man and sighed.

‘Even if it’s from a Demigod, a True Voice isn’t something a mere mortal can endure, regardless of how heaven-defying and lucky they are. Brat, this old man will help you this time, but you must hold on until my assistance can reach you.’

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In the place where the one called Old Fool was gazing, a once raging battlefield had become enveloped in silence.

The combatants were all gazing in a certain direction silently, their minds chaotic and their thoughts unsaid. Although none of them had witnessed what had happened, they had all heard that malevolent voice.

“Keuk...!”

“Ahhh!”

“Blergh...!”

Without warning, every single individual in the vicinity broke down and collapsed to the ground.

Blood flowed from their seven orifices and their eyes rolled back into their heads. Some were foaming at the mouth, while others directly vomited. However, regardless of their reaction, the pain they felt was real.

The True Voice that had rung out a moment ago had reached them all. It could only be said that they were lucky enough to not be directly targeted by it.

Although they couldn't understand what the voice had said, nor could they totally understand what the voice even was, they got to keep their lives in return.

The mana in the atmosphere immediately dispersed as the True Voice spoke. Qing Tan's shadow army and Feng Qing'er's Runic Scriptures disappeared into thin air. Even the dark material of the Apostles seemed to have become silent.

As everyone attempted to regain their bearings, Feng Qing'er's eyes suddenly landed on the only other ally she had in the vicinity.

“Ah!”

She couldn't help but yelp in shock at what she saw. When Qing Tan turned to look in the same direction, her expression became grave.

“We have to go.”

She squeezed out the words with everything she had in her. Her body shakily rose from the ground, stumbling over to Damien's position.

The bird-like Commander-level shadow that Qing Tan had summoned earlier reappeared underneath Feng Qing'er, lifting her off the ground and gliding to Qing Tan's position.

Soon, it had put Qing Tan and Damien on its back too. Without the slightest hint of hesitation, it flapped its massive wings and shot into the distance.

The Apostles didn't even care to pursue. Unlike the three outsiders, they had an inkling of what had just happened.

Their figures were prostrated on the ground unmoving, their eyes filled with tears. Whether they were tears of sadness or joy, even the Apostles didn't know.

On one hand, the old man had died. He was their leader and their main support pillar. Without him, nothing would ever be the same again.

It was a truly mournful event, making their blood boil with thoughts of vengeance.

However, on the other hand, they were graced with something truly magnificent.

Their Lord had descended personally.

They had been allowed to hear his voice.

Uncaring of the fact that such a descent had caused them unending pain, they were honored and jubilated to have been able to hear that heavenly chime.

Even as the night passed and the sun slowly rose on the horizon, the Apostles didn't move from their prostrated position.

Chapter 314 Death's Door [2]

When Damien's body collapsed to the ground, he seemed to have gone through a myriad of changes. His hair became grey, his skin became wrinkled. He had aged hundreds of years in the span of a few seconds.

It wasn't just that his vitality was overdrawn or depleted. If that was enough to cause such a scene, then every person would rapidly age right before their death.

Damien's situation was different.

He had just experienced the insurmountable gap between a mortal and someone who had stepped into the realm of godhood.

The gap between 3rd and 4th class was big, sure, but it was nothing in the face of this gap. At the end of the day, both 3rd and 4th class existences existed within the realm of mortals. Even with the Universe Baptism, this fact didn't change.

This was why, as long as he could use external help, Damien still had the potential to kill entry-level 4th class existences.

However, even if one was at the very peak of 4th class only seconds away from ascending to Godhood, there wasn't even the slightest hint of hope for them to defeat a Demigod, regardless of their methods.

That was the kind of concept Godhood was. The fact that Damien was even alive after being directly targeted by a Demigod's True Voice while he was just a 3rd class was a miracle. Or rather, it was a testament to the achievements and legend he had built up until now.

Within Damien's mind, multiple disasters seemed to have struck at the same time. A raging tsunami topped with a massive hurricane, an earthquake and an erupting volcano. As all of these disasters occurred, a tide of beasts rampaged wantonly and caused destruction while burning their life force for power.



Even with all of that, it wasn't enough to describe the chaos in Damien's mind.

His Mind Prison stood in the middle of the cracked and crumbling mindspace like a sole bastion of hope. Damien's ego took shelter within the construct as it attempted to withstand the winds and rain.

Even if he wanted to try and think of a solution to the problem, he wasn't able to. Any attempt to form conscious thought would only cause the damage in his mindspace to worsen.

As for Damien's body, it could be said to be in a better position than his mind, but that wasn't saying much. Besides the fact that he had rapidly aged into a decrepit old man, his mana was raging out of control within his body, attacking his internal organs and structures with no regard for its own safety.

Voom!

Damien's mana circuit suddenly roared into action. The artificial nervous system he had created was emitting a powerful suction force as if it was using a devour ability.

The Void Flames spread through Damien's extremities and used its powerful influence to try and suppress the rampaging mana, Damien's dragon bloodline roared with vitality as it attempted to put his body back together.

All of these parts that Damien had made with the intention of allowing them to act as a self-repairing and functioning machine were doing their best to counter the damage he had sustained, but at best they could only slow the process so his body didn't die immediately.

Thump! Thump! Thump!

Although his real heartbeat was incredibly weak, his Mana Heart was beating at full force, regulating all the repair processes that were currently ongoing.

With the power of the suction force increasing due to the interference of the Mana Heart, large portions of ambient mana suddenly entered Damien's body after being stolen from the outside world.

But the circulation of this mana would only lead to more damage. Instead, the ambient mana all went straight into Damien's Mana Circuit and fused with it. The artificial nervous system slowly became thicker and stronger, while also attaining a level of flexibility it previously didn't have.

The Ananta Matrix was evolving under pressure to cope with the current situation, but Damien couldn't enjoy it at all.

Even if the situation within his body was holding onto a delicate balance, the situation in his mind was very close to ending in defeat.

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In the outside world, Feng Qing'er and Qing Tan worriedly watched Damien's body for any changes.

After escaping Acier on the back of Qing Tan's Commander-level bird shadow, they had rushed to Darknorth to rest and recuperate.

The reason they chose it was simple. It was the farthest city from Acier, which meant that if the Apostles decided to pursue them later, they'd have more time to prepare.

But a week had already passed and no new problems seemed to arise.

During this week, the two of them were able to fully heal from the injuries they sustained after the True Voice descended, and they spent most of their time looking after Damien.

He had taken the brunt of that attack. Even seeing the changes that had happened in his physical appearance, they couldn't imagine the kind of pain he was going through.

"Is there anything we can do?" Feng Qing'er asked anxiously.

"Sigh, you've already asked this question tens of times over the past week, but nothing had changed. In the end, we are too powerless to do anything." Qing Tan responded wearily.

With the state of affairs as it was now, she had dropped her previously playful attitude.

She was a thrillseeker and she was someone who would act on a whim without care for others, but she wasn't heartless.

In fact, once she made a friend she was far more loyal than ordinary people would be. And over the course of the past few months, she had truly come to regard both Damien and Feng Qing'er as her friends.

Seeing Damien's condition, Qing Tan had tried many things to help him, but she wasn't able to find a single probable solution.

"The main problem is that I can't even get a full understanding of what's going on. If I try to send my mana or awareness into his body, it either gets devoured or repulsed. All we can do is make sure we guard him and provide what we can."

Feng Qing'er nodded powerlessly. She was even more distraught than Qing Tan. She was a straightforward and blunt person. She didn't know much about decorum even though she held such high status. Brazen and bold, heroic and valiant, this was how other people tended to describe her.

But inside, she was still an innocent girl who was sheltered from birth. She grew up surrounded by only women and her closest friend was a block of ice. Even when Lunaria Snow showed emotion, it was the kind of thing where one would only realize it if they were close enough to her to understand her nature.

Spending time with Damien was a breath of fresh air. She loved Luna as her closest sister, but both Damien and Qing Tan were outgoing and fun people whose personalities were similar to hers.

She didn't want Damien to die. Feeling the emptiness that she was feeling now when death was only a possibility, she didn't want to know what it felt like to truly lose someone she cared about.

But even the Reincarnation Flames were unable to help Damien's situation. Instead, they had been devoured just like Qing Tan's mana and awareness when they entered his body.

Although Feng Qing'er was curious about the little golden flame that had shown itself to devour her Reincarnation Flames, she suppressed her curiosity and put her utmost focus on observing the situation.

And like this, another week passed.

Feng Qing'er and Qing Tan had fallen asleep while caring for Damien, unable to withstand the fatigue they had accumulated from hearing the True Voice.

They had been so concerned with Damien that they had only treated their bodies without paying attention to their minds.

While the three remained unconscious within the small room they stayed in, a miniature space crack abruptly opened in the void above Damien's head.

And from that space crack, a mysterious greenish white essence flowed into Damien's mouth like water from the most refreshing spring in existence.

Chapter 315 Death's Door [3]

“Ugh...”

A dim blue light shone through Damien’s eyelids and forced his consciousness awake. Slowly but surely, his eyes managed to glitter open.

“Where am I?”

The last thing he remembered was trying to escape Acier with Feng Qing’er and Qing Tan, but now he was in a mysterious space that didn’t even look like it was part of the Trial World at all.

He was currently inside of a shimmering blue harrier shaped like a soccer ball. The space around him was completely dark, like a sea of emptiness. In the distance, he could see many floating islands that looked like broken chunks of earth floating in the void.

‘Did I die?’

It was the first thought that came to his head. He clearly remembered how his vitality left his body and how his mind was on the verge of collapse. It wouldn’t be too surprising if he had died.

‘No, that’s impossible. I refuse to accept it.’

His thoughts were still incredibly muddled, and he felt a splitting headache that wouldn’t go away ever since he woke up. The fact that he was in such bad condition made him feel that he had survived.

‘But that leads back to my first question, where the hell am I?’

Damien moved towards the edge of the barrier and reached out his hand to touch it. At that moment, he realized something odd about the current situation.

His entire body was incorporeal like a ghost, and it was shining in a similar blue light to that of the barrier around him. But despite his incorporeal state, when he touched the barrier, he could clearly feel the sensation of his hand touching a sturdy wall.

Damien furrowed his brows. ‘It seems my physical body isn’t in this strange world, but then what is this? My consciousness, a soul form? If it’s either of those two then it gives me a better grasp on where I might be right now.’

And once he slightly understood his location, he also understood the nature of the barrier currently surrounding him.

‘The Mind Prison.’

In his desperation to survive, his ego had taken shelter within the Mind Prison to wear the storms that were raging through his consciousness after he received the blow from the True Voice. He only had a vague recollection of that event, but after that, everything was blank.

‘Looking at the current situation, things seemed to have calmed down a bit.’

Although he didn't know much about his mindscape, he knew it shouldn't look like this. All those floating islands scattered through the void made him feel a sense of trepidation.

'Sigh, if that's a physical representation of my mind, then I'm screwed big time.'

From what he could see in his immediate line of sight, there were at least hundreds of islands. If he took into consideration the fact that he didn't know the actual size of the space he was currently in, there could very well be thousands or even more.

His mind was truly shattered. Considering how many pieces it had been split into, it was a miracle he was even able to form conscious thought.

'Something must be facilitating my recovery.'

As he slowly adapted to his current state, the hazy memories of his suffering the past few weeks came back to him in fragments. From what he could surmise about the state he was in before he completely lost consciousness, it was impossible for him to heal through his own efforts.

'Sigh, if I could see my status window right now, things would be so much easier.'

Although the status window didn't outline his condition, there were bound to be changes he could use to figure out some information. Also, he could see the backlog of system messages that could possibly alert him of what happened.



Perhaps his legend was enhanced, or the Primordial Undying Tree sent a message. Either way, there would be something for him to see.

Without understanding the situation, Damien didn't want to rashly act. If he made some mistake by accident, it could very well spell his death.

With this thought in mind, he returned to the middle of the Mind Prison and sat down, adjusting his mental state and concentrating on the situation outside.

Time passed slowly.

'I don't know how long it's been, but at least I've managed to gain some information.'

Firstly, the many islands that were scattered around the area were slowly moving. Their directions weren't set, but after a long period of observation, Damien could understand that they were being drawn to each other.

If his guess as to what those islands represented was correct, then the fact that they were trying to reconnect symbolized the healing of his mind.

'But it's way too slow.'

There was no way for Damien to feel the flow of time in this space, but from a rough estimate, he felt that it'd take at least half a year for his mind to recuperate at its current speed. And that was even with the external help that he was being provided.

'How do I make this process faster?'

He had many things to do in the outside world once he woke up. He couldn't afford to be comatose until the Trial World finally closed.

The Apostle he had killed using Void Essence wasn't simple at all. With what he experienced, he was sure that the old man was something akin to an Avatar.

Which meant that the voice that was able to harm him merely because he heard it belonged to the Demon God.

'Things have become much more complicated.'

His original plan was to slowly assassinate the Apostles and then move on to the Demon Kings, completely cleaning up the Trial World before it came time to leave. But it seemed he was no longer able to do that.

The Demon God had started placing attention on him. If it was a 4th class that had done so, it would've been difficult but not impossible for him to continue his plans, but a Demigod was different.

If even his voice alone was able to cause such devastating damage, then a real move from him would wipe Damien out before he could even understand what happened.

Going to Acier again had become impossible, so targeting the Demon Kings was out of the question. But to lure the Apostles out of hiding should be somewhat simpler.

‘No matter. First I need to heal and wake up. Only after that will I be able to put anything into motion.’

Damien closed his eyes and began meditating. Since he was currently inside his own mindspace, he had an inexplicable connection to the surrounding environment.

Connecting with it should’ve been easy, but as he attempted to spread his awareness, he was met with a splitting headache.

“Argh!”

He groaned in pain, and soon noticed that the progress the floating islands were making towards reconnecting had been set back by a small margin.

‘I can’t act on the large scale right now. Trying to control my entire mind when it’s in pieces like this is like putting the cart before the horse.’

Realizing this, Damien changed his approach. Instead of spreading his awareness, he focused it into a single point and tried to connect to the floating island that was closest to him.

Whoosh!

A minor feeling of refreshment washed over his body. As the link slowly took shape, Damien felt that formulating his thoughts became much easier.

Finding the path forward seemed to have taken a short amount of time, but Damien knew better. He had to carefully word every thought of his and take time so that it didn't exhaust the small amount of mental power he had.

Now that he had formed a connection with the island, the amount of mental power he had slightly increased, making it so he could focus on the task in front of him for longer periods of time.

But he knew he wasn't anywhere close to finishing. His gaze soon moved to the second closest island to him.

His mental power activated and circulated like it was mana, and with his command, the island he was connected to slowly started moving in that direction.

Chapter 316 Death's Door [4]

Another week quickly passed in the outside world, and massive changes had taken place in Damien's situation.

His body, which had shown no signs of recovery for so long, was now encased in a strange greenish white cocoon. Inside the slightly transparent cocoon, Damien peacefully slept.

“Has anything changed since this thing showed up?” A woman’s voice spoke from the side.

“I can’t tell. No matter what I try, I can’t spy on what’s happening inside that cocoon. But, from what it looks like on the outside, his vitality seems to be slowly regenerating.” Another woman responded.

As she said, Damien no longer looked like a decrepit old man. His body inside the cocoon had gained a bit of vitality, and although he still looked aged, his skin had a certain luster to it that it didn’t have before.

“Agh! I can’t keep sitting around like this! If he’s healing, then it’s good, but we’ve been sitting here doing nothing for way too long. When he wakes up, this bastard better compensate us well!” Feng Qing’er grumbled.

“And how do you want him to compensate you? Perhaps...with his body?” Qing Tan responded with a sly smile.

“You...how can you speak such nonsense with a straight face? Do you not have any shame?” Feng Qing’er yelled as she blushed furiously.

“And why should I be ashamed? I’m obviously joking. Or don’t tell me...were you actually considering it? Ahh~ what will the outside world think if they learned that miss high and mighty, the Fire Phoenix Queen herself; had fallen in love with a boy! It would be an uproar!”

“Who has fallen for that bastard?! If anything, wouldn’t the aloof and mysterious Qing Tan diligently caring for a man for weeks on end cause even more ripples? Mm, that’s right! Since when has that free and unfettered woman ever taken the time to care for someone like this? All of your fans would go crazy!”

Qing Tan’s eyes widened in shock. “Wow, you can actually tease someone like this? You’ve really grown!”

“Hmph! Who do you think I learned it from?” Feng Qing’er puffed out her chest in pride.

“Well, going back to the main point I have to agree with you. Now that we know he isn’t in much danger, I think we should go out and get some fresh air.”

“Exactly! But, I’m still a bit worried about this cocoon thing. Where did it come from? How come it’s so powerful? There are too many questions that we don’t have answers to.”

Feng Qing’er frowned as she spoke. The feeling she got from the greenish-white cocoon bothered her immensely. A power that surpassed any she had seen before. Considering the fact that her mother was a 4th class existence more powerful than even the Demon Kings, it was natural that this feeling irked her.

“Answering those questions is something I want to do as well, but the best we can do is wait for this guy to wake up and ask him. You should’ve felt it too. Whether it be the voice from before or this cocoon, they are powers far beyond our scope of understanding. Carelessly messing with them will only be detrimental to us.”

“You’re right, but I can’t help it. I’m just too curious. Fine! When he wakes up, you tie him down and I’ll force him to tell us everything he knows!”

“My, my! How kinky!”

“You shut up!”

After bickering for a bit, the two went on to discussing serious matters again. As they had said, it was about time they started moving again.

After they had passed out a week prior, they had stayed asleep for 3 days straight. Over the course of those 3 days, their minds and bodies were relieved of any excess fatigue they had been enduring.

But when they woke up, they had found a strange light film wrapping around Damien. They had tried their best to combat it, but nothing they tried worked. Eventually, that light film grew until it was the cocoon they currently saw.

They then spent the next few days watching in concern that something terrible would happen, but in the end; the cocoon was a blessing rather than a curse.

“Hey, wasn’t this bastard planning to do some assassinations before he ended up like this?” Feng Qing’er suddenly questioned.

He hadn't intentionally revealed it to them, but Feng Qing'er had managed to learn it at the last moment when they were escaping Acier together.

It was just a guess at first, but when coupled with the way he took out the old man Apostle, she was sure she was correct.

Qing Tan clapped her hands together in realization. "That's right! Even if he wasn't planning it, that's a great idea. Assassinating the Apostles is far less work than trying to confront them head-on or at the same time. It's the most effective way to kill them."

"Exactly! Plus, we still have to get revenge on them for what happened on the mountain."

"The question is, how do we lure them out of Acier?"

Feng Qing'er had the same doubt. Although they had been stationary for the past few weeks, they had gotten plenty of information from the geniuses outside.

During the raid on Acier, almost half of their numbers had been killed, so the rest of them stuck together in a big group to avoid dying early. Those who had followed Feng Qing'er's faction in Astoria would sometimes visit Darknorth and relay some information to her due to their gratitude for her sheltering them back then.



According to those geniuses, there hadn't been any large movements from Acier recently. Even the abomination raids had temporarily halted.

It could be explained if one considered the demons' losses when Acier was raided. When it came to Demon Generals, only a few tens of them were killed, but most of the Captains had been massacred.

They had also lost an Apostle and a Demon King. These two losses were worth more than any others combined.

But even with this, Feng Qing'er didn't think the silence was so simple. And she trusted her intuition.

"It'll be difficult to move them. We need to find a way to incentivize them." Qing Tan suggested.

"Right. We can use revenge as an incentive to draw out the stupider ones among them. There should at least be one or two that decide to recklessly pursue. After that, though, we need something more substantial that's guaranteed to make them move." Feng Qing'er replied.

"Ah, I got it! It's a bit simple, but sometimes simple is best. Haven't you heard the saying? Men die for wealth and birds die for food. Do we have any treasures that could incite their greed?"

"Treasures, huh..."

Feng Qing'er fell into thought. It was really a simple yet efficient idea. After all, the Primordial Undying Realm attracted so many geniuses due to the prospect of treasure. It was only after they entered that they realized the realm was completely different from expectations.

But the problem was, she couldn't think of a treasure that'd incite those Apostles to move without care for their safety.

The two girls fell into thought for a while before Qing Tan's eyes abruptly lit up.

"I got it! A treasure that'd make the Apostles overcome with greed!"

Qing Tan's sparkling eyes fell on a certain location, and Feng Qing'er soon followed. When she saw what Qing Tan was referring to, she couldn't help but exclaim.

A grin soon surfaced on her face.

"Indeed. If it's that, let alone the Apostles, even the Demon Kings wouldn't be able to hold themselves back!"

Qing Tan nodded in agreement.

"Good! Since we've figured this out, let's start planning for real."

Assassinating Apostles...Qing Tan felt that another wave of exciting adventures was about to be upon them. And frankly, she couldn't wait.

#### Chapter 317 Assassination [1]

The demon city of Acier was enveloped in a gloomy atmosphere ever since the raid that had taken place a few weeks back.

Although regular mortal citizens hadn't been harmed due to both the separation of city layers and the consideration of the invading forces, a large portion of the demons' combat power had been destroyed by the battle.

And with the excitement of the outside forces as they left the city, news that even an Apostle and Demon King had fallen in the battle couldn't be suppressed. The faith the demons had in their Apostles had begun to falter slightly.

In this atmosphere, the once lively first layer had lost its original charm, but the citizens continued their day-to-day lives. There was nothing else they could do.

"Sigh, how did it become like this? Since when were we ever on the losing side?"

A guard who was patrolling the entrance to the mountain sighed to himself. In recent days, his job had become much more grueling.

Not only had the number of guards patrolling the base of the mountain been increased, their strength had also been increased. Now, there were hundreds of Demon Captains and even a few generals patrolling the area.

“It’s all those damn outsiders’ fault! If it weren’t for them, who could challenge our mighty rule? Argh, I want to tear them apart!”

Another guard muttered in frustration when he heard his comrade’s words. The few guards around them also grit their teeth in shame and anger.

Everything had changed when the outsiders attacked. There wasn’t a single demon among them that didn’t want revenge. But at the same time, they knew they didn’t have the strength to do anything.

Even the weakest outsiders could slay Captain-level demons, and the strongest ones could even kill Apostles. From the bottom of their hearts, they were extremely fearful of the position they were in now. After all, as the ones guarding the base of the mountain, they’d be the first to die if another attack took place.

“Sigh, whatever. Let’s just continue our duty and pray that they don’t attack again. Hopefully, the Demon God can give us his blessing and allow us to come out on top of this tribulation.”

When the guards were about to return to their usual patrols, a faint rustling sound came from the nearby foliage.

“Who goes there?!”

They raised their weapons, but nothing came out to greet them. Carefully, they approached the bushes while getting into formation.

“Hah!”

Clang!

A swift spear shot forth and pierced the bush, erupting with mana and blowing it to shreds. However, there was still no response. Unexpectedly, the tip of the spear had hit the side of a thick metal case.

“What is this?” One of the guards questioned.

The guards crowded around the case and tried to pry it open, but no matter what they did, it wouldn’t budge.

“It seems to be locked. Forget it, we’re too low-level to deal with this bullshit. Let’s take it to Sir General and let him deal with it.”

With this thought in mind, the guards immediately reported back to the Demon General who was overseeing their area. Soon? The General arrived before them.

“Sir, this case seems to have appeared out of nowhere, but we have no idea what the contents are. However, there are no mana fluctuations coming from it so we have assumed that it isn’t a bomb.”

“Hmm, you may leave this matter to me. Continue with your patrols and report any other discrepancies you find.” The General responded.

“Yes sir!”

After the guards left, the Demon General took his time to inspect the box. However to his surprise, it opened with the injection of just a small amount of his mana.

“Those wastes couldn’t even figure this much out?” He muttered.

His hands quickly went towards the lid to open it. But when he saw the contents within, he almost fainted on the spot.

“T-this is...!”

He immediately closed the lid and grabbed the chest, rushing up the mountain without thinking of anything else.

'I must report this to the Lord Apostles. This isn't something I can handle!'

He ran with all his might, even infusing mana into his legs to increase his speed. He didn't even stop after reaching the fourth layer, ignoring everyone who tried to stop him as he rushed to the pantheon at the mountain peak.

"Lords! Something major has happened! This is an emergency!"

He yelled at the top of his lungs when he reached the base of the pantheon. Soon after, a burly man exited its doors and stood in front of him.

"Bastard, you better have a good reason for disturbing this King. If not, don't expect to leave here alive." The Apostle flared his aura as he spoke, exerting a heavy pressure on the General.

In normal times, he wouldn't even be bothered to deal with something like this. The Apostles would receive news from the servants stationed outside the pantheon instead of personally coming out. But times had changed.

For a Demon General to be so bold as to openly shout in front of the pantheon, the news must've been related to the outsiders who had been getting in their way at every turn.

With this in mind, the Apostle couldn't sit still. Even the old man had died because of the outsiders. Although the Demon God had intervened and dealt them a heavy blow, it didn't help to quell the rage in his heart.

The Demon General could clearly feel the irritated mood of the Apostle, so he didn't delay at all.

"Sir, when my men were patrolling the base of the mountain earlier, they came across this chest. This lowly one felt that this matter isn't something he could handle alone, so he came directly to report."

The General quickly handed the chest to the Apostle, who looked at it with a deadpan face.

"Why should I care about this? Is it some treasure? Just keep it for yourself. I doubt it can pique this King's interest anyway."

"No, sir. Please open the chest and see for yourself."

Feeling curious, the Apostle soon did as the General suggested.

Thud!

The sound of something heavy hitting the floor rang through the silent fifth layer. The Apostle's face was colored in shock, changing from red to white constantly.

"This..."



Boom!

The Apostle's aura raged. The surrounding space trembled and cracked under its pressure.

"WHO DARES?!"

His furious roar rang through all of Acier. Some mortals even fell directly unconscious when they heard it.

"What happened?!"

"Proto, why are you screaming out here?!"

"Who dares attack us?! Come out, you bastards!"

Feeling the surging aura, multiple other Apostles exited the pantheon to try and figure out the situation. At first, they assumed that another attack had been launched on their city.

But when they reached the outside of the pantheon, they all fell silent. Their gazes had been attracted to the strange smell and aura coming from the chest that was on the ground.

As Porto's aura continued wildly surging, the chest could no longer handle the pressure and cracked into pieces. From its rubble, two spherical objects and a letter fell to the floor.

When the rest of the Apostles saw the sight, they couldn't help but feel their chaotic emotions rise as well.

After all, rolling on the ground in front of them were the heads of Granheim and Kroa, two of their fellow Apostles that had been slain by the outsiders.

One of the Apostles shakily bent down and grabbed the letter that accompanied those two heads and opened it.

Along with a location, there were four simple words written on the parchment in black blood.

But these words only served to heighten the Apostles' fury even more.

"Come if you dare."

Chapter 318 Assassination [2]

Within the pantheon, the six remaining Apostles sat around a now much more empty table as they fumed with rage.

“They actually dare to provoke us! Do they really think they’re so great after just a few victories?!”

“Calm down. This is obviously a trap. Otherwise, how could they be so confident? We must silently endure and wait for the Lord’s instructions.”

“Wait?! And let them believe we are cowards that have submitted to them?! Absolutely not!”

“So what are you going to do? They’ve already proven multiple times that they can defeat us, so how do you plan to get the vengeance you speak of.”

Many opinions circulated as the Apostles expressed their views on the situation. In fact, the number that wanted to immediately charge to the given location and fight it out had largely outnumbered those who wanted to wait and endure.

Proto sneered when he heard the cautious comments of his comrades.

“Please, if it weren’t for that brat from before, how could they have the power to challenge us? Now that he’s been dealt with by the Lord, those two little girls can’t harm us at all.”

“And who decided that? Haven’t you seen the recording of that Phoenix girl’s battle with Kroa?”

“Ha! And how can Kroa compare to me?! In the end, they’re all just women. When faced with a true man like me, they have no choice but to submit and kneel at my feet.”

“Proto, don’t go too far. Do you believe I won’t kill you here and now?”

Of the six remaining Apostles, only two were women, but they both were glaring at Proto with surging killing intent as he spoke. When it came to physical power, it was guaranteed that he was above them, but in terms of mana, he didn’t come close to them at all.

If they fought for real, it was undecided who would win.

“Tch. As if the two of you count. Your power comes from the same source as mine! You are subordinates of the Lord, so naturally you aren’t considered the same.”

The two women furrowed their brows but said nothing in the end. Although they wanted to refuse his indirect jab, they couldn’t. After all, it was true that they were borrowing power from their Lord. They didn’t have the capital to argue that women were on the same standing as him.

But Porto’s attitude had always been like this, and frankly, they were sick of it. Perhaps, in the bottom of their hearts, they were secretly waiting for him to go challenge those two girls and die by their hands. That would be the greatest proof of their point.

“Whatever. I will stand by my statement that we should wait and see. Regardless of your personal beliefs, our numbers have already dwindled to this extent. We can’t lose more due to foolishness.” Another Apostle sighed.

The rest silently agreed after looking around the table. It was hard not to notice how much emptier it was now than it was a few months ago.

“Tch! You can do whatever you want! I’m leaving!”

Proto harrumphed loudly and stormed out of the hall. Looking at his retreating figure, the rest of the Apostles sighed.

“There’s no way to stop him. Even if we tried to convince him otherwise, he wouldn’t listen. And the origin of our power prohibits us from using force on each other.”

“What should we do then? It’s clear that he’ll die if he charges in there alone.”

“Someone has to go with him. Although he isn’t the strongest, the power of his fist can’t be underestimated. If he is allowed to fight the enemy one-on-one, he might come out victorious.”

“So who will go?”

When the question was raised, three hands shot up at the same time. The three Apostles glared at each other, not willing to back down.

“All three of you can’t go. Let’s decide this fairly and draw lots.”

The drawing was soon completed, and another burly Apostle was chosen to accompany Proto. The other two sighed in defeat, but accepted their loss.

In usual times, they'd fight for the position. But the number of Apostles was already so low, they couldn't act arbitrarily. It wasn't up to them anymore.

"Nali, I guess it's you. Don't let us down and bring us back the heads of those wenches."

"If you die out there, I'll make sure to recover your corpse and humiliate you even after death."

The Apostle named Nali nodded firmly. He had no plans to be defeated. Taking one last look at the four remaining Apostles, he left the pantheon and chased after Proto.

"Sigh, this is the most we can do. We need to conserve our numbers in case any unexpected situations arise."

"If those two don't return..."

The Apostles were silent. They didn't want to imagine it, but if the scenario came true then...

“There’s nothing else to say. We’ve been placed in a disadvantageous position for the first time in our lives and things have developed negatively ever since. We have to learn from our loss and make sure we move precisely and decisively from here on out.”

The four of them nodded in determination. They were the only ones left to serve their Lord and carry out his plans for now. They no longer had room for mistakes.

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There was a large forest not far from Astoria that spanned for many kilometers on end. It was one of the many similar forests that constituted a large portion of the Trial World’s space.

This forest, however, was special, as it was the chosen location that was mentioned in the letter that was sent to the Apostles a few days back.

“Do you think they’ll come?”

A soundless transmission traveled through the air and landed in Qing Tan’s head. Her awareness was spread to its limit, surveying any movement in the area.

“They’ll come. I noted them when we were fighting in Acier. At least one of them is guaranteed enough to fall for our provocation even if he knows it’s a trap.”

“Oh? Who is he?”

“How am I supposed to know his name? All I know is that he’s unnecessarily muscled and grotesque looking. I remember him well because of the annoying look he had on his face.” Qing Tan’s expression was cold as she recalled the face of a certain Apostle.

“I wanted to kill him at that time, but then that unexpected situation happened and I couldn’t do anything. This time, I’ll be sure to end it.”

“Oho? Someone actually annoyed you to this extent? That’s unexpected.”

“Tch. It can’t be helped. Even though I’m like this, I’m still a woman too. That bastard kept going on and on about how women are weak and all this bullshit. If he really shows up as I expect him to, then I’ll make sure I treat him very nicely.”

Feng Qing’er shivered at Qing Tan’s tone. The last time she heard this tone, 10 Demon Generals had been tortured gruesomely.

With nothing else to say, she turned her attention back to the forest and spread her awareness as well.

‘This time, we’re doing an assassination. They’ll be expecting a frontal battle because of the way we lured them here, so we need to entertain them somehow.’



Qing Tan spread her shadow and called her three Shadow Generals, letting them roam into the forest and take position at three different points.

As the two girls waited patiently, they finally sensed some movement on the outskirts of the forest.

Qing Tan flashed a chilling smile. Like a silent predator stalking its prey, she melded into the shadows, disappearing from the perception of even Feng Qing'er, who was right beside her.

"Finally, they're here. And it looks like that bastard really decided to show up."

Feng Qing'er nodded heavily and moved as well. They had already planned everything for this day. Now, all they needed to do was carry it out.

Chapter 319 Assassination [3]

"Is this the place?"

A burly man stared at the large forest in front of him with a murderous gaze. His eyes scanned from left to right, trying to find any signs of life within the vicinity.

"Why are you asking such a stupid question? You should be able to see it too, right?" Another man responded.

"I see it, but I can't believe it. These women sure have balls, openly inviting us like this."

Proto gnashed his teeth as he spoke. He was already someone who hated the feeling of being looked down upon, but being looked down on by a woman was even worse.

"Tch. Let's just go. Regardless of what they have up their sleeves, they can't do shit to me."

Proto puffed out his chest and flared his aura. Without hesitation, he walked into the forest while brazenly showing off his position.

Nali sighed before following him in. 'Something doesn't feel right about this.' He thought inwardly, but there wasn't anything he could do at this juncture.

He wanted revenge as much as the next person, but he was more careful in how he went about it. He didn't like how brazen Proto was being.

But the die had already been cast.

Nali walked through the forest carefully, spreading his awareness outside his body to prepare for any sudden attacks. Unfortunately, his mind was relatively underdeveloped, so his awareness could only spread a few hundred meters away. But this was still enough space to allow him time to react.

Shiver!

As he walked further, he felt an inexplicable chill run down his body. The forest around him suddenly dimmed, as if the moonlight had been blocked by the dense foliage above.

'No, it's not that.'

His eyes hardened as he began circulating mana through his body. His eyes darted vigilantly from side to side, and his awareness became concentrated to the extreme.

Rustle!

"Who?!"

Nali swiftly turned around, throwing a fierce punch in the direction of the sound. With a bang, the trees and bushes in the direction of his fist were reduced to dust.

'There's nobody?' His eyes furrowed when he realized this. 'Have I become too paranoid?'

Swoosh!

As he had the thought, something sped into the range of his awareness, reaching his position before he could even register what it was.

"Fuck!"

He twisted his body unnaturally, narrowly dodging the attack that had been aimed at him. Using the momentum of his spin, he threw a punch at the fleeing predator.

'Damn. That thing is fast.' He thought, noticing his blow had failed to land. But even though he didn't gain a substantial advantage, he at least knew that he was truly being targeted.

Since it wasn't paranoia, he maintained his extremely vigilant state, walking forward and continuing deeper into the forest.

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Concealed within the clouds above the forest, Feng Qing'er watched this sequence of events take place.

From the beginning, she was aware that assassination wasn't her forte. Her personality and affinity were perfectly matched, being specialized in frontal combat and explosive power.

But for this mission, they had specifically chosen to assassinate their targets.

Feng Qing'er knew that such a scheme wasn't necessary. There were only two Apostles present and they had already been separated. Feng Qing'er had the strength to fight an Apostle one on one and obtain victory.

'But this is a perfect opportunity to train.'

She didn't have any major hopes of becoming extremely cunning. She knew herself better than anyone, and as such, she was aware that it was impossible for her to develop in such a direction. Instead, she just wanted to expand her repertoire a bit.

Feng Qing'er had risen to the sky using her physical wings, so she emitted no obvious mana fluctuations. Combined with the fact that she was currently concealed by both the natural clouds and her own technique, it would be difficult for someone to spot her even if they knew where to look.

From this position, she watched as Nali made his way through the forest, cautiously attacking anything that made even a hint of sound.

'Now.'

Suddenly, she gave a command. A black blur swept down from the clouds next to her and entered the forest, extending its claws and attempting to pierce through the Apostle's skin.

"Bastard!"

Nali dodged just as easily as he had done the first time, suffering no damage. But Feng Qing'er wasn't perturbed by this.

The black blur soon returned to her side, and its form was revealed. It was Qing Tan's Commander-level Shadow Bird.

'Good, let's continue this for a bit more.'

Time passed slowly, and Feng Qing'er continued with the same strategy. She allowed Nali's paranoia to grow as the shadow bird swept down and attacked at random intervals.

At this point, he had already stopped moving forward and was situated in a single location, quietly trying to anticipate the shadow bird's next attack.

His eyes were closed and his senses were heightened to the max. Each rusting of tree branches and movement of the wind was clearly reflected in his mind.

'It should be coming at any second now.'

He knew that the enemy wasn't one of the two girls he had originally come to find, but killing it would allow him to find them. After all, he had personally seen this bird when they fought in the fourth layer of Acier a few weeks back.

'That one is more dangerous than the fiery one. She's too cunning to be left to that musclebrained Proto.'

If Proto was given to Qing Tan, his death was already guaranteed. He needed to kill the shadow bird to attract her attention before it happened.

'Now!'

The mana circulating through his body burst through his fist. His eyes shot wide open and his body pivoted to the left. A furious punch flew forward and impacted a black blur that had dived down from the clouds to attack him.

Skree!

A pained cry rang out as the bird shot back and impacted a nearby tree with a thump. Maki chased after the bird, raising his leg into the air and shooting a swift kick at its wings.

Bang!

The bird's eyes shone with panic as it tried to escape from its predicament, but Nali had acted too fast.

Crack!

The bird's wings, which were mid-flap, bent at an unnatural angle as a cracking sound rang through the surroundings. Another pained screech soon followed as the bird collapsed to the ground.

Nali didn't waste any time. He grabbed the bird by its throat and began to squeeze with all his strength.

"Why don't you call for your master? If you don't, then you're guaranteed to die here."

His grip became tighter, and the bird's cries soon lost their vigor. Truthfully, he didn't care if the bird called its master or not. Since the two were bound to have a spiritual link, he was sure that killing the bird would alert the master.

'Wait, something's wrong.'

He abruptly frowned. The sensation in his hand wasn't like that of flesh anymore. It was like he was squeezing a wet towel soaked in ink.

When he looked down at the shadow bird, he noticed that it was melting into the shadows around him. In its eyes, there was a light of disdain that couldn't be hidden.



Nali abruptly realized his mistake. He tried to turn around to see if there was another presence in the vicinity, but his head soon became muddled.

"It's already too late."

A silvery voice rang out from behind him. Although he wanted to turn around and look at the one who spoke, he found that he wasn't able to.

A sensation of heat began to spread from his nape and consume his body. His muddled head became even worse as the heat spread.

"You...!"

Fwip!

As he roused his mana in a bid to clear his head, a flicking sound spread from behind him. In the next instant, he found a dull orange needle embedded in his throat.

"This isn't something I've mastered completely, so its effects are a bit slow. But it seems to be doing its job properly."

Feng Qing'er smiled as she watched the incapacitated Apostle. Although he could only feel the single needle in his nape, she could see his true situation.

The back of the Apostle's body was littered with hundreds of needles. During the time that Feng Qing'er had been probing him using the shadow bird, she had condensed each and every one of them with care.

These needles were condensed with the essence of Reincarnation Flames. Since the dark material and Nox mana that ran through Nali's body were qualified as evil presences, the flame's effects were amplified.

Nali's body was being purified from the inside out. But since Feng Qing'er had used such condensed essence, there wasn't any flashy stimulus to accompany it.

Without much suspense, the Apostle's body crumbled to dust, with only a single reddish-orange flame remaining in the place where he once stood.

Chapter 320 Assassination [4]

'Success!'

Feng Qing'er silently celebrated her victory. Although it didn't go exactly how she wanted it to, it was still an overall success.

The main factor that allowed her to kill the Apostle with such ease, though, was the shadow bird.

Firstly, it had created a paranoia that turned the Apostle's entire focus onto it. This way, Feng Qing'er's existence had been completely disregarded. Because of this, she was able to silently prepare all of her fire needles without any interruption.

Secondly, it had focused the Apostle's attention on Qing Tan. When it was caught in the end, the Apostle was thinking only of how to lure Qing Tan to his location, which gave Feng Qing'er the opening she needed to strike.

But her own achievements couldn't be ignored. Her Reincarnation Flame needles had similar power to the Phoenix phantoms she usually used in battle when they were just condensed. But on top of that, Feng Qing'er had used her flame runes to exponentially increase their power output.

Although her attack looked simple on the outside, it contained enough force to raze an unprotected mountain to the ground within minutes.

And because she had the element of surprise on her side, she was able to interrupt the opponent's mana flow with her own raging flame mana as the force was transferred into his body.

It was only natural for the Apostle to die when such force was concentrated in his unprotected body.

'Nevertheless, I can't do something like assassination on my own yet.'

If the shadow bird wasn't present, Feng Qing'er wouldn't have been able to prepare such an attack and use it precisely. Nor would she have been able to launch her attack successfully.

Sighing lightly, she lamented how unsuitable she was for this kind of job. But still, the thrill and intent of being at the forefront of a true battle were much more suited for her. She didn't mind being untalented in assassination.

Shaking off her thoughts, she directed her gaze at another part of the forest. Most likely, Qing Tan was having a blast torturing the other Apostle that had arrived.

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"Finally. That's ten connected islands."

A tired sigh rang out within an endless void. Damien looked at the fruits of his strenuous effort over this unknown period of time.

"How long has it been in the outside world? I hope it's not the same as it is in here."

He couldn't tell the time very well in the mind space, but it felt like months had gone by. The worst part was, even within this time he had only connected 10 islands together.

"Each time I can connect a spiritual string to an island and pull it to connect to the next one, my mental power increases by a slight margin. Whenever the islands are actually connected to each other, I experience an exponential increase in mental clarity. Although the process gets faster with every island that I connect; the increase isn't worth mentioning at this juncture."

Damien signed again. With his tireless effort, he learned much more about his situation. As he had expected before, these islands were something of a manifestation of his broken mind space. If he wanted to heal his mind and return to the land of the living, he had to connect them into one fused plane again.

"This is too slow. Even if I'm experiencing some sort of time dilation or illusion, I can't keep doing this for years on end. Even if my mind is repaired after I finish, I'll probably lose my grip on reality when I wake up. I can only try to speed up."

With this thought in mind, Damien didn't hesitate any longer. Now that he had more mental power available for use, he could achieve more with less effort.

His eyes closed as he entered meditation once again. From his forehead, ten shimmering blue strings emerged and shot into the void ahead.

They expanded for what seemed like tens of kilometers before reaching their destinations. Unlike before, Damien was directly trying to build spiritual links with 10 islands at once.

"Argh!"

The connection was hazily established as he expected, but his mind felt like it was tearing apart when it happened. The fused spiritual land that Damien had created up until this point began to tremble as if its foundation was being rocked.

"Fuck! I can't let it crumble. If it crumbles, everything I've worked for will collapse along with it. I need to...speed up!"

Damien poured out waves of mental power into the spiritual strings he had created. His connection with the ten floating islands slowly became firmer.

Boom!

A loud explosion rang out from the fused spiritual land. Pieces of rock drifted away into the void as a portion of it collapsed.

"Dammit! Condense!"

Damien furiously roared into the void. He handled the ten floating islands without care, forcefully dragging them to the location of the fused spiritual land.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

As the floating islands drew closer, they scraped against each other and created small explosions. Pieces of rock and debris fell into the void from the point of collision, but at the same time, the floating islands began to fuse into one.

"Condense! Condense! Condense!"

Damien roared madly without pause. His mental power wrapped around the fused spiritual land and pushed it towards the ten floating islands.

Now, the two sides were moving towards each other at a rapid pace.

"AHHHHH!"

Damien screamed out. His incorporeal body started burning with blue flames. His lower body was already starting to disappear.

The overuse of his mental power came with severe consequences. At this point, he was also just a condensed bundle of mental power that housed his consciousness. If he burned too much of it, his ego would be erased.

"DAMNIT! LISTEN TO ME!"

With another furious roar, he pushed even harder. Now, it was all or nothing. If he could fuse the fused spiritual land with the ten floating islands before his spiritual avatar burned away, his mental power would be replenished and even heightened. But if he failed, the only path left for him was death.

The blue flames burning on his body became fiercer, completely enveloping his lower body and turning it to nothingness. Even the Mind Prison couldn't protect him from damage he was purposefully inflicting on himself.

The space between the ten floating islands and the fused spiritual land continued to shorten; but as it did, more and more chunks of rock and debris fell into the void.

"You think I'll die here? This is my own mind, dammit! All of you shitty islands belong to me! So, obey me you little shits!"

From the start of his journey, he had forged a will of steel. A will to remain unafraid even under the threat of death. In the current situation where he was within his own mind space, this kind of will became even more important.

It seemed as if the floating islands had been dominated by his call. The speed they moved towards each other rapidly increased until finally...

BOOM!

A huge explosion resounded through the void as the fused spiritual land came into contact with the ten floating islands. The fused spiritual land soon began devouring those islands into itself, rapidly expanding in size until it was the size of a small city.

The blue flames on Damien's body had already grown into a raging inferno. His upper body was nearly completely consumed, leaving only his head wholly intact. But he didn't seem fazed by this at all.

"Hahahaha! Hahahahahaha! I fucking won you bastard!"



He yelled like a crazy person, letting the flames sweep over his body. The difference was, he now felt comfort within these flames instead of pain.

The fused spiritual land soon finished devouring the ten floating continents and consolidated its power. Waves of mental energy burst through Damien's body, solidifying his avatar and returning it to its peak state.

"I did it! Now that the fused spiritual land has doubled in size, doing the same thing again won't consume all my mental power. Taking ten islands at a time instead of one, now my progress will naturally speed up!"

Damien excitedly muttered to himself. His eyes were closed as he reveled in the sensation of his mind slowly healing.

Perhaps, that was the reason why he didn't notice the flash of greenish-white light that was flickering in a certain area of the void.