

Void 321

Chapter 321 Assassination [5]

"Ahh~ this is supposed to be an assassination mission, but I really can't bring myself to finish it so quickly."

A soundless mutter exited the mouth of a beautiful black-haired woman who was perched on a large tree within the forest. In her line of sight, a burly demon angrily marched forward, trying to find traces of her existence.

"Dammit! Get down here and fight me, woman!" He roared into the night sky.

Proto was already thoroughly enraged. It had been many minutes since he entered the forest, but he had yet to make contact with anyone else. Even Nali was no longer by his side.

If it was just that, he wouldn't have been so enraged. The problem was that every few minutes, he'd sense mana fluctuations not far away from him, signaling that someone was nearby. Every time he reaches the point where the fluctuations originated from, though, he'd be met with empty air.

'Dammit! This bitch really thinks she can play with me! I'll see how she begs me to release her when I finally conquer her. Keke, let's see how you run from me.'

Proto vividly remembered the appearance of those two girls. One was fiery and bold, while the other was cold and playful. Their personalities differed, but they both perfectly fit the type of woman he most loved to conquer.

'Plus, that kind of beauty can't be found just anywhere. Tsk tsk, if only I could find where those two sluts came from, I'd be able to have as many beauties as I want.'

As Proto fantasized about what he would do after he caught his prey, his expression twisted into a perverted grin. Seeing this, Qing Tan had the urge to throw away all pretenses and simply kill him right then and there.

'No no no. Calm down, Qing Tan. What's more fun when you see scum like this? A quick death? Or when they plead for mercy under your feet? That's right, be patient.'

When the scene of her torturing Proto appeared in her mind, Qing Tan was quickly able to curb her desire to kill.

As time passed with Qing Tan further angering Proto with various tricks, the night became darker. The moon in the sky above reached its peak and began to descend once again.

But the darkness in the forest only continued to spread.

Proto finally sensed substantial movement in the surroundings. Pushing mana into his legs, he rushed over. When he reached the location, he found a familiar figure quietly standing in the dark.

"Winthrop." He muttered. Seeing the fallen figure of his former comrade, he couldn't find any emotion in his heart besides disgust.

"Not only did you lose and shame our name as Apostles, but you also lost to an outsider, a woman at that. You were supposed to be a man! Your job is to dominate! What can a woman do in front of you besides grovel and beg for your meat?! How could you lose to such a pathetic creature?"

Every word that left his mouth was laced with coke ferocity. His mana slowly circulated through his body before increasing its pace.

"Don't worry. This shame might be a stain for you, but I, as a fellow brother, will wipe it clean by erasing you from the face of the earth."

He charged at his former comrade, his fists moving like lightning to pierce the opponent's flesh.

Bang!

A large explosion rang out as the air around Proto's fists imploded. The force of his punch far exceeded what it looked like on the surface, causing the ground to concave into a massive pit.

The Shadow Commander Winthrop calmly watched the incoming fist. His face was obscured by a black fog, so his expression was unreadable. But his body didn't move at all from its position.

When the fist impacted the Shadow Commander, it caused his entire body to scatter as if he had been blown to bits. However, true to its nature, the body quickly coagulated once more before solidifying.

"Tch. Petty tricks. How many times do you think I need to punch before your body can no longer reform? Heh, let's find out."

Proto started throwing a barrage of punches without pause. Even after the Shadow Commander's body was blown to pieces, he didn't stop, disallowing his opponent from reforming his body.

While the rain of fists continued, small pieces of the Shadow Commander's body separated and began to latch onto Proto. Strangely enough, his dark material didn't move to stop them at all.

Over time, the pieces of shadow accumulated to the point where the Shadow Commander's body no longer existed. It was only when he saw that his opponent was no longer returning that Proto stopped punching out.

"Hmph. To think you were turned into something as weak as this. You can rest in peace now knowing that I'll be taking care of that slut for you."

"Oho? And how are you planning to take care of me?"

Unexpectedly, a reply came from the surroundings. However, it seemed to be coming from every direction instead of a single point.

"You must be the black-haired bitch. Good, I like your type more. Stop with the pathetic games and come face me like a man."

"But I'm not a man, though? Actually, why is it that you're so obsessed with men? Could it be that you're..." Qing Tan didn't finish her sentence, but started giggling as if she discovered a big secret.

"Could it be that I'm what?" Proto responded in frustration. He could tell that the woman was teasing him, he just didn't know what she meant.

"Huh? Don't tell me you're actually this dumb? Well, you have to be lacking brains if you actually thought coming here was a good idea. Not only you, but even the rest of your comrades. Only 2 of you? We've already proven that we can kill you guys in small numbers, so why send only 2? The effects of a collapsed leadership are really harsh!"

Qing Tan rambled aimlessly. But she was indeed telling the truth. Even the Apostles who had said they were willing to endure until they received further instruction from the Demon God were brimming in hatred and a thirst for vengeance.

Only, they didn't have the guts to openly accept the challenge they had been presented with.

It was why they accepted Porto's willful actions instead of trying to stop him, while using the excuse that they couldn't act against each other to justify their cowardice.

The old man who previously led the Apostles was the type to remain level-headed in every situation. It was why they didn't make such foolish mistakes under his leadership. Now that he was gone, they no longer had such a figure to keep them in check.

But most of the Apostles would never acknowledge this. The ones who did acknowledge were too powerless to do anything about it.

"Woman, what's with all this talk? Are you stalling so your friend can come help you? Come out and fight me already!" Proto yelled.

He didn't care about the internal structure and politics of the demons. He only cared about his own morals and values. Hearing Qing Tan's rambling just irked him more, since it meant she was too scared to show herself to him.

"Fight?" Qing Tan muttered in response. "Since when was there a need to fight?"

"Hahaha! So you are planning to surrender yourself to me willingly? As expected, you are just a coward who was hiding behind that man from before."

"Wow, you can still talk like this? Even after so much time you haven't realized it?" Qing Tan could barely contain her laughter.

The more idiotic this guy was, the better it was for her. His dark material had been corroded to the point where it was almost useless already, and her shadows had taken full control of his body, but he was still talking about fighting.

Proto frowned. "Don't play mind games with me. Just come out and fight!"

"Fine, fine. It can't be helped. I'll just help you learn it with your body then."

Qing Tan jumped down from her perch and landed in front of Proto with a smile.

"Now then, shall we get started?"

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Immediately after her words fell, Proto realized that there was something wrong with his body.

He felt weakened; as if the power he used to carry had been largely diminished. If he threw a punch now, perhaps he wouldn't even be able to harm his opponent.

"You...what did you do to me?" He questioned with a wary look on his face.

"Oh, you finally noticed? It's just a bit of preparation for what's to come, of course."

"What's to come? Whatever, shut up and fight me properly, slut."

"That's what you want? Then okay! Come at me! I'll let you have the first move."

Qing Tan cheerfully accepted his challenge. The gleam in her eyes was full of mischief as she waited to see how he would embarrass himself.

Proto still felt that there was something wrong, but he didn't pay it much mind. He had come here to fight, and the slut he was looking for was standing in front of him. There was nothing else to think about besides victory.

He charged once again at the enemy, pushing his mana to increase his speed. However, it seemed like no matter how far or how fast he moved, he wasn't getting any closer to the woman in front of him.

"What's this?"

It was like his feet were submerged in quicksand, dragging him down the more he tried to struggle. When he looked up at Qing Tan, he finally noticed the smirk on her face.

"You see," she said as she started to walk forward, "there was never any fight that was going to happen here. From the second you stepped into the forest, the only outcome was death. What gave you the courage to charge in here after seeing the deaths of your comrades? Did you think you were special?"

Qing Tan wasn't even trying to provoke him at this point. She was genuinely curious how someone with so much power could be such a dunce.

"Of course I'm special! Those trashes lost to a slut like you, so they're nothing! However, do you think you can hold me down with just this little trick?! Think again!"

Proto roared a battle cry and pulled his body up. His muscles flexed and struggled, and even his veins started to surface on his skin.

"Haaaaa!"

With a spirited shout, he leapt into the air and escaped the quicksand-like ground. Or at least, that's what was supposed to happen. Regardless of how he struggled, Proto couldn't leave the confines of the marsh. In fact, his body had already been submerged up to his knees.

"Are you done yet?" Qing Tan smiled as she reached the edge of the marsh.

"Well, I don't care either way. I'm really itching to start the treatment!"

"What treatment?" Proto growled. Even now he hadn't stopped struggling to get out of his predicament.

"Of course, it's attitude adjustment! I, the kind and gracious Qing Tan, will be your instructor for today's course! Using my handy dandy attitude adjuster, I'll turn you into an upstanding citizen!"

Qing Tan formed a large knife out of shadows as she spoke. It was the attitude adjuster she had been speaking about.

After she formed the knife, she walked forward once more. Her body easily walked across the dark quicksand as if it didn't exist at all and arrived in front of Proto.

"Are you ready to start the course?"

"Shut up bitch!" Proto roared. This overconfident slut had entered his strike range of her own free will. Although his legs were tied, his arms were completely free.

An extremely fast and ruthless punch cut through the air, aiming to blow off Qing Tan's head in one blow.

"No, no! Bad boy! Using fists to solve your problem isn't good! Time for an attitude adjustment!" Qing Tan muttered.

Her finger glided through the air and tapped, causing Porto's fierce punch to immediately halt. The bundles of shadows that had already corroded Porto's dark material clung to his arm and didn't allow it to move forward even a single inch.

Crack!

The bones in his arm shattered from the sudden shift in momentum.

"Ugh..." Proto let out a mutter of pain, but Qing Tan wasn't even close to done yet.

Swish!

The winds whipped lightly as Qing Tan's knife slid through the air. In the next instant, both of Proto's arms fell to the ground and sunk into the marsh.

"First lesson! Solving problems with violence is wrong! Since you use your fists to talk, the solution is to make sure you don't have fists anymore!"

"You—"

Proto was about to yell again, but a bundle of shadows crawled up his face and wrapped around his mouth, preventing him from saying anything.

"Save your questions until the end, please! Say, I have a question for you! Why are you so high and mighty about the fact that you're a man? Could it be that you're hiding some sort of insecurity?"

Qing Tan slyly grinned as her knife moved again. Proto suddenly felt that his lower body had become slightly lighter.

"As I thought! There really is nothing there!" Qing Tan snickered.

Proto's face went red in shame as he realized what she meant, but the tight binding around his mouth didn't allow him to rebut.

"Anyway, this thing doesn't matter much. Even if I wanted to cut it off, there's nothing much to cut. Instead, let's move on to lesson two! Treat women with respect! Since you love to molest women with your eyes, your kind and merciful teacher has decided to help you!"

Qing Tan's knife went to work again. The surrounding forest was soon filled with the muffled cries of a man, but there was nobody around to hear them. Even Feng Qing'er was too far away to notice.

When Qing Tan was done, there were two eyeballs coated in mana floating in the air. Tears of blood were streaming down Porto's face endlessly from his now empty eye sockets.

"You know, I thought I'd be satisfied with just this much, but it turns out it isn't enough at all. Hmm, let's have a spontaneous third lesson! Since your mouth loves to use such vulgar words like 'slut' and 'bitch', why don't I let it experience something new?"

A small hole appeared in the middle of the bindings around Proto's mouth, but he still couldn't talk since his lips were sealed. If he still had eyes, though, he'd be gazing at the current scene in horror.

Qing Tan looked at the two floating eyeballs with an eerie smile. In the next instant, the two balls shot through the hole in Proto's bindings. The hole closed soon after.

"Now, chew."

Qing Tan's hands wrapped around Proto's chin and forcefully moved it. His mana had already been locked and his dark material had been corroded. With his legs trapped and his arms cut, Proto could do nothing besides weakly resist like a child who didn't want to eat his vegetables.

But how could a child compare to an adult? Soon, gruesome crunching sounds echoed through the forest just like those muffled screams had only a few moments prior.

Qing Tan watched the whole process with a wide smile. It was a smile that hadn't faded ever since she had first started her attitude adjustment course.

Unfortunately for Proto, the night was still young.

And until the hazy light of dawn broke the cold of night, muffled screams and other gruesome sounds could faintly be heard from a certain forest within the Trial World.

Chapter 323 Search [1]

As dawn arrived in the Trial World, Qing Tan stood up from the tree that she was leaning on and lightly stretched her body.

“Ahh~ what a refreshing night!”

She smiled happily as if a huge burden had been lifted from her shoulders. After that, she spread her awareness to find Feng Qing'er, soon skipping away to meet her.

In her wake, there was a puddle of sludge left on the ground of the forest. Surrounding it was countless stains of black blood littered around, staining the ground, trees, and anything else found in the vicinity. This was the only thing remaining of the Apostle once known as Proto.

“It's been so long, Qing'er should be waiting for me already, right? Why didn't she come find me?” Qing Tan muttered to herself.

Her body soon melted into a shadow that darted through the forest. Around half an hour later, she finally found what she was looking for.

In this part of the forest, there was a small hill from which trickled a waterfall leading into a naturally formed hot spring. The water was clear and without impurities, looking incredibly enticing to any who gazed upon it.

But currently, the dazzling scene looked muted in front of the beauty who was in the center of it all.

Flowing red hair draped down her back like a river of lava, her skin was pale as snow but contained a red hue from the heat of the water. Her snowy skin and fiery hair came together to form a picture that made it hard to pull one's attention away.

Her arms were raised above her head as she basked in the soothing water of the hot spring, accentuating those proudly standing twin peaks on her chest that glistened as droplets of water ran down their surface.

In the current atmosphere, the bright pink cherries that decorated those peaks stood out even more.

Qing Tan's gaze moved downwards, passing the woman's slim waist and looking towards her hips and the hidden valley contained between her thighs, but unfortunately, the water slightly distorted her view, making it hard to get a clear picture.

"Hehe~"

Qing Tan giggled lecherously as if she was a man peeking at his crush in the bath. Her eyes carried a mischievous glint that'd make anyone nervous about what she was planning to do next.

Soon, she quietly stripped off her own clothes, revealing a figure that didn't lose out to Feng Qing'er's in the slightest.

Qing Tan usually wore a deep black cloak that hid her figure from the eyes of the public. With her affinity and fighting style, this was the best type of clothing for her. Those who had seen her figure in all its glory didn't even number past two, and even Damien wasn't a part of this group.

It was a shame for all humanity that there was nobody else around to witness the scene of her undressing, as every one of her movements seemed to carry a natural and unintentional air of seduction. Even women might have been forced to endure nosebleeds if they witnessed it.

Once she had finished stripping, she put her clothes into her spatial ring and quietly snuck up behind Feng Qing'er. The entire time, she had remained concealed using her darkness affinity so Feng Qing'er couldn't notice her.

And when she saw the perfect opportunity, she pounced.

"Kekekeke! I finally got a hold of you!" She cackled manically. Her hands wrapped around Feng Qing'er's chest and began to grope wantonly, molding those melons into all different kinds of shapes.

"Ahh~ you...what are you doing?!"

Feng Qing'er let out an unexpected moan at the sudden feeling of pleasure before turning red in shame. She tried to rouse her mana, but Qing Tan was far faster.

"Kekeke! Beauty, let's see how you escape my grasp!"

Qing Tan moved like an experienced old pervert. She expertly evaded the flames that shot towards her and kept her hands on Feng Qing'er's body. Slowly, her hand crept past those twin peaks and invaded Feng Qing'er's legs, creeping towards the valley that hid between them.

"Oho~ so smooth! Looks like you've been preparing yourself for this!" Qing Tan muttered slyly. Her fingers soon reached their goal and curled inward.

"Ahh~"

Another heavenly moan left Feng Qing'er's mouth. She had never even touched herself in such a way, let alone having another person touch her like this.

Even though the other party was hiding their identity through a veil of fog and a modified voice, Feng Qing'er knew from the beginning that it was Qing Tan. Otherwise, she would've killed the offender already.

Knowing Qing Tan's personality, she had tried to stop her without too much force, but feeling the pleasure and heat coming from her lower body, she could no longer bear it.

“Enough!”

A massive burst of flames appeared around Feng Qing’er, forcing Qing Tan away.

“You little bitch! See how this Young Miss deals with you today!” Feng Qing’er yelled furiously. In the next instant, she pounced on Qing Tan.

‘Oops! I think I went a bit too far...’

Hearing the rage in Feng Qing’er’s voice, Qing Tan was ready to accept a light beating as punishment. Even she had to admit that going as far as targeting her sacred garden was a bit too much.

And so, she sat still and patiently waited for Feng Qing’er to strike. But the attack she received was too unexpected, causing her to let out a yelp of surprise.

“Ah! You...!”

Qing Tan soon felt two hands on her body the same way she had just treated Feng Qing’er. Her proud peaks were ravaged and her sacred garden was invaded by snake-like fingers.

“Ahhh~ stop! I was wrong, I apologize!”

Qing Tan quickly tried to retreat, but a warm flame suddenly encased her body and halted her movement. Unexpectedly, instead of harming her, the flame actually increased the pleasure she was feeling.

“You know, the Reincarnation Flames are pretty great. Not only do they have fierce offensive power, they also have a healing and cleansing effect that doesn’t necessarily lose out to someone with wood or life element. Who knew it could be used this way?” Feng Qing’er cackled.

Her hands became bolder and bolder with time, not leaving Qing Tan any room to talk back. Suddenly, her left hand moved quickly and pinched one of those pink cherries, while her right hand curled in a certain manner within the sacred garden.

“Take this!”

“Ahh~”

Qing Tan was forced to let out another moan of pleasure. Even though she loved to fool around, this was the first time she was tasting retribution for her actions. In reality, she was just as innocent about such matters as Feng Qing’er.

Soon enough, though, Feng Qing’er eased up on her assault, allowing Qing Tan the opportunity to escape.

The two girls moved to opposite ends of the natural hot spring, both of them breathing heavily and trying to collect themselves.

Once they finally caught their breaths and regained calm, they sat awkwardly in silence.

“That was...” Feng Qing’er tried to speak, but she didn’t know what to say.

“Uhm...how about we just...never talk about what just happened again...” Qing Tan responded.

“Right. Let’s never talk about this. Especially in our current circumstances...if that bastard found out...”

“Yeah, even I’m not prepared for what that shameless guy would say if he knew. Anyway, did everything go well on your end?” Qing Tan diverted the topic.

“All good. Thanks to your shadow bird, I was able to do things cleanly. What about you? I assume that asshole didn’t have a good end?”

“Kekeke! You could put it that way...” Qing Tan’s expression looked a little perverted when she thought back to the events of the previous night, causing Feng Qing’er to shrink back.

“Well, now that this is over with, there’s only four Apostles left. To take care of them, we’ll need to be much more serious than we were this time.” Feng Qing’er said with a thoughtful look on her face.

Although they did some minor planning for the assassination mission, it wasn't much. They knew that all variables could be controlled by them.

But their second plan wasn't something that could be pulled off so easily...

Chapter 324 Search [2]

"I'm confident that we can succeed if we use that thing as bait, but is it necessary? If I could choose, I'd prefer to not do that." Feng Qing'er muttered.

"That's true. Regardless, that thing is an important asset. Having it with us will guarantee us far more safety than if we have to place it elsewhere for bait." Qing Tan agreed.

That item wasn't something they could handle so casually. Since it was readily available when they were first thinking of the plan, it was naturally what they first thought of using as bait. But with time, they realized they had been rash.

To use that thing as bait, they needed to place it in a position where they couldn't easily access it. They had to make it look as if it was a natural treasure instead of something they arranged. If they did it like that, then it would be difficult for them to use it if the situation became dire like it did back in Acier.

"Do you have something else in mind?" Qing Tan asked. With the way Feng Qing'er brought it up; it seemed like she had an idea.

“Right. While I was waiting for you to return, I suddenly remembered something my mother told me before I entered this realm.” Feng Qing’er responded.

“Not only her, but even the Elf Queen had told us that there would be treasures and opportunities within the Primordial Undying Realm besides the tree itself. In fact, my mother was one of the participants in the previous opening 10,000 years ago.

“She wouldn’t tell me much about the realm no matter how much I pestered her, but I at least got a bit of information out of her. That is, within this realm, there are other inheritances besides that of the Primordial Undying Tree.”

“Other inheritances?” Qing Tan’s interest was piqued. Originally, she had thought that the promise of other benefits was a ruse to attract more people to the realm. Hearing that it was true made her curious.

“That’s right. Although I don’t know the level of those inheritances, I know that my mother found one back then and it greatly helped her in improving her strength.

“Right now, we still have a little less than half a year within this realm. The timeframe of an entire year seems to be far too long when you consider how things have been until this point, but if you put those inheritances into consideration, it makes more sense.

“We have plenty of time left, so we should split up and put our focus into finding an inheritance site. Not only will we be able to gain benefits if we can get our hands on the treasures within, we can also create a natural opportunity to get rid of our enemies. Plus, we won’t have to do all the work ourselves. We can borrow a knife to kill them.”

Qing Tan fell into thought. “Using an inheritance site this way is truly much better than our original plan. Plus, if they die within the inheritance we’ll be able to preserve our strength for the coming trials instead of risking so much. It’s a much better idea than our first one.”

“Let’s give ourselves 2 months. Obviously these inheritances are well hidden or else we’d have stumbled upon one already with how much we’ve been traveling around the realm, but there’s still plenty left unexplored. 2 months gives us plenty of time to explore, but also leaves us 3 months in case the inheritance site is more difficult than expected.

“As a matter of fact, those few geniuses that remained missing until now might’ve already received their own opportunities.

“If we can’t find an inheritance site within 2 months, we’ll build our own fake inheritance and use that thing to draw people. If we can find one, then we can spread the information and end our time within the Trial World with a bang!”

Qing Tan pumped her fist in the air excitedly as she finished her words. The only benefit she’d gotten with all the dangerous stuff they’d been through so far was the advancement of her star. She wasn’t like Damien with his devour ability.

But since she’d already reached the White Star level, this didn’t matter much to her anymore.

Now that the prospect of treasure had been reintroduced into the conversation, it was like killing two birds with one stone. It was only natural for her to get excited.

The two girls talked over a few more points before exiting the natural hot spring and getting dressed.

“Good, then let’s meet back up in Darknorth in 2 months. At that time, we can decide how we want to move forward.”

“Alright. I’ll see you then.”

With one final nod, the two girls took off in opposite directions, each with their own thoughts and plans in mind.

Within the infinite void, Damien calmly sat in his Mind Prison and observed the fruits of his labor.

“Finally, I’ve made substantial progress.”

After his first attempt at merging ten floating islands at once, Damien had used the same method until he fused 100 of them into his fused spiritual land. After that, he had increased the number he merged to 50 at once.

Learning from his past experience, he no longer dared to challenge the upper limit, lest he end up killing himself by exerting more than he was capable of.

“Still, now that I’ve gotten to this point, another problem has arisen.”

Looking into the distance, Damien’s eyes landed on a flickering greenish-white light. Underneath that light’s glow, there was actually a second fused spiritual land!

“That thing must be what helped me retain my life after I encountered the Demon God. But why does it seem like it’s opposing me instead of cooperating?”

Damien’s fused spiritual land had long surpassed the size of a city and was similar to the size of a country already.

With the second fused spiritual land having a similar size, there weren’t many floating islands left within the infinite void.

In fact, Damien could clearly feel that the repairs made under that greenish-white light would also contribute to the regaining of his mental power, only, to a lesser degree than when he did it himself.

The problem stemmed from the fact that there seemed to be an invisible game of tug of war between him and the light, as if he had to battle it for control over his mindspace.

But at the same time, he could feel that the light held no hostility towards him. Instead, it emanated a kind of encouraging feeling.

“Sigh, things keep getting more and more complicated. Next thing I know, I won’t be able to leave my mindspace even after I fully merge all the floating islands into a complete fused spiritual land.”

The tug of war was fine if it was just for floating islands. It didn’t have much lasting effect. But if it happened between two fused spiritual lands...

Damien didn’t want to imagine the kind of damage his mind would suffer during the process.

“All in due time.”

But he didn’t find himself troubled by this. He had been concentrating on the task in front of him for what seemed like years on end, and his mind had gained a certain tranquility that it didn’t possess before.

Even facing such a situation, he didn’t desire to act rashly and he didn’t try to come up with any crazy solutions to immediately solve the problem. Instead, he simply sat back down and closed his eyes, extending his control to the remaining floating continents and continuing his task.

Chapter 325 Refining [1]

Time continued to pass and at some point, Damien realized that there were no longer any stray floating islands remaining in the void. Instead, there were two massive fused spiritual lands whose combined size would reach that of a continent.

“Most of the work is completed now,” Damien muttered.

Essentially, his mind was almost complete. Once the two halves reconnected, he was generally certain he'd be able to exit his mindscape.

"The pull of that light has gotten much stronger in these last few days. If I wasn't consciously controlling my territory, it probably would've been drawn over by now."

Damien glanced at the light with a hint of trepidation in his eyes. No matter how much he knew it didn't have hostility towards him, in the end, it was still a foreign entity within his mind space. He didn't know what its goal was or even what its identity was.

"Logically speaking, I could just let go of my control and allow my fused spiritual land to connect with the rest, but I can't do that. I won't feel secure unless I take care of it myself."

The only reason this game of tug of war continued was because of Damien's insistence on completing the task himself. If not, he probably would've woken up already.

But something in the back of his mind kept telling him not to give that light control. It was telling him that he'd regret not fighting for his position.

And so, he continued this grueling task.

While putting his mind back together hadn't been too hard of a task once he had gotten used to the process, the main obstacle was the sheer amount of time and willpower it took to do so.

How long had it been since he entered this strange state? Damien didn't have any way of knowing. What felt like years within this realm may as well have been only a few hours in the outside world. But regardless, to him, it had been years.

Besides the time factor, the second most challenging part of the situation was the loneliness of it all. There was quite literally nothing within this space, which was why Damien had been calling it a void.

Besides the mind prison and the fused spiritual lands, it was just an unending blackness. In this kind of environment with no company besides one's own thoughts for years on end, it wouldn't be far-fetched to say that most would go insane.

'But for me, coping wasn't that hard.'

It wasn't the first time. That was what made it easier for him.

The first time he had been in a similar situation, it was at the very start of his journey. Back then, he was weak in both mind and body. The only sliver of will he had came from the fleeting words of his deadbeat father and his motivation to save his mother from her predicament.

In such circumstances, he had prevailed and came out stronger than ever. He had reformed himself into the person he was today, someone with the qualifications to roam the myriad worlds and experience the adventures he was currently experiencing.

The will he had now was incomparable to what he had back then, so how could he be fazed by this loneliness? If it wasn't for the fact that he had things to do both here and in the outside world, he would've capitalized on this solitude to sort out some of the problems he had been facing recently.

"But none of that matters right now. I should focus on trying to usurp control from that light."

Damien stood up and floated towards the wall of the mind prison. When he reached out to touch the transparent walls again, he noticed how much more corporeal his body had become.

"En. In this time, I never dared to leave the confines of the Mind Prison in fear of my ego scattering. But with my current mental power, that should no longer be a problem."

When he first woke up, his mind space was in a chaotic state. Along with the fact that his spiritual land was severed into thousands of floating islands, the chaotic void itself was a danger.

He would occasionally encounter large storms of mental power that tried to tear the floating continents asunder. If his avatar had been caught in one of those storms, it would've been like a wisp of flame within a hurricane.

It was due to these storms that he first discovered the existence of that light. It had shone brightly and bathed his mindspace in its aura, immediately quelling the whipping winds.

But those were all problems of the past.

His current mindspace was no longer plagued by spiritual storms, and his avatar was no longer on the verge of collapse.

Thinking such, he slowly pushed his hand forward.

Click!

The faint clicking of a lock resounded through the void, and Damien felt the corporeal walls of the Mind Prison become illusory. His hand soon passed through and entered the void, followed by the rest of his body.

“Wow...”

He couldn't help but let out a gasp of admiration. This feeling was completely different than what it was like inside the Mind Prison.

“Is this my true mindspace? It feels similar to what it was like to drift through the starry sky on my way to the Cloud Plane. Actually, I should go back there when I have the time. Outer space is an extremely beneficial environment for me to cultivate in.”

Throwing away his stray thoughts, Damien once again turned his attention back to the greenish-white light in the distance.

“I don’t feel any risk in approaching it. In the first place, there’s no safety precaution I could possibly take against it.”

His thought process was simple. So far, it had been a war between underlings, where the kings watched over and directed their forces from the back lines.

But the war was reaching its close. In the final phase, it was time for a battle between kings. If Damien could defeat that light or gain control over it, it would be much easier to subsequently control the second fused spiritual land.

Damien willed his avatar to move through the void. It was a similar feeling to traveling between spatial layers. Soon enough, he arrived in front of the light that he had been combatting for all this time.

“As it turns out, it was actually a flower...”

In the middle of that greenish-white light stood a small flower with twenty-three petals. Its surface seemed to go through a myriad of changes every second, never once maintaining the same shape.

“What a mysterious thing. But then, how do I combat a flower?”

It was different if it was a plant that had gained intelligence and cultivated, but this flower was completely spiritual and didn’t seem to have any attack power.

“Ah! Maybe I should refine it?”

Refining treasures to enhance the body was something Damien had heard mentioned many times, but because of his devour skill, he had never felt the need to try it. Instead, he had already directly refined his physical body plenty of times.

But now, the situation was slightly different. He was a spiritual avatar and the treasure in front of him was a spiritual flower. He didn't know if things worked the same in such a situation, but he still felt like it was the best course of action.

“In the worst case, I fail and have to think of another way to complete my spiritual land. In the best case, this flower benefits me and makes me stronger, while I also gain the former advantage as well. Since there aren't any terrible repercussions to acting right now, then I might as well try it.”

If the flower had offensive ability or the intention to harm him, it would've done so already. It was present when he was at his weakest point, and it could've acted then if it really wanted to.

Since it didn't, Damien had some minor confidence about the stakes of his current gamble.

And since there wasn't any need for more hesitation, Damien directly dove into the cloud of greenish-white light and extended his hand towards the flower within.

Chapter 326 Refining [2]

Strangely enough, the resistance he expected from the flower never came. When his hand wrapped around it, it turned into a gentle stream of energy that flowed into his avatar.

Damien closed his eyes and began meditating. Greenish white streams of essence continuously nourished his avatar, causing it to slowly become more and more corporeal.

Damien felt strange. It was like he was cultivating in his physical body, but he didn't have a mana circuit or any of the normal pathways he'd normally use for circulation.

He was relying solely on instinct to guide the energy where it needed to go. And in reality, that place wasn't his avatar at all.

A spiritual avatar was just that. Although it might've technically been an embodiment of Damien's spiritual world, it wasn't his mind itself. It was only a vessel for him to traverse his mind space more easily.

But the main benefit of an avatar was its connection to the main body. And that was also the reason why Damien was circulating the energy of the flower through his avatar before sending it into his mindspace.

Damien couldn't feel the connection to his main body at all, but he knew it was present. Using this, he went through the normal processes he used to call upon his Void Essence, hoping that his conjecture was true.

And in fact, he soon found that it was. A wisp of pitch black essence soon broke through the void and circled around his avatar. The essence then shot into his spiritual body and enveloped the greenish-white essence that was filling it up.

A refreshing feeling followed soon after. Regardless of how mysterious the greenish-white light was, how could it compare to Void Essence?

For the energy of the flower to safely reside in his body, it had to be at a level that a 3rd class like him could bear. When that Demigod lent him its energy, he had to consider this fact.

After all, the True Essence of a Demigod would cause the body of a mortal to explode in an instant. What that Demigod had given to Damien was an extremely diluted portion of this essence. But due to its origins, even this diluted portion was enough to help him recover.

Perhaps, if it was that Demigod's undiluted essence, Damien's current comprehension of Void Essence wouldn't have been enough to control or refine it. But since it wasn't, he was able to do exactly that.

The Void Essence encompassed the gentle energy of the flower and began doing its work. Under its coercion, the already refined energy became even purer.

After going through the Void Essence's refinement, the energy flowed out of Damien's spiritual avatar and began to nourish his mindspace. Slowly but surely, the once empty void was filled with color once more.

Currently, Damien wasn't able to completely focus on the refinement process. Instead, he was being forced to witness a set of strange images.

There was once a world among the endless cosmos where nature triumphed all. The lush greenery seemed to cover the entirety of the world, filling it with life force unlike any other.

The inhabitants of this world were peaceful races. Being influenced by the nature of the world itself, they put down trivial things like racial barriers and infighting and lived a utopian lifestyle.

Trade flourished, empires and kingdoms bloomed, and technological advancement was in full force. It seemed like every era these races went through was a golden era.

Damien looked at these flashing images in awe. Was it possible for such a place to exist? Especially in the environment that was created under the system's influence.

The past few years had been filled with blood and adventure. Seeing such a world made Damien feel as if it was simply impossible.

But he couldn't deny its existence.

The scene changed. The world Damien had just seen was nowhere in sight. Instead, it was replaced by ruins.

The world he currently saw was barren, to say the least. The lands were dyed in blood and darkness. Life force was corroded whenever it tried to appear, making it impossible for any greenery to grow.

Even living beings were affected. This world had a death rate that surpassed the rate at which the living beings within gave birth, causing the population to continuously decline.

The cities were ravaged. Due to the fact that the atmosphere was slowly becoming uninhabitable, food shortage became a major problem. Children born into this world were more often than not malnourished, dying before they could reach adulthood.

The scent of death lingered in the air. Damien wasn't even physically present in the world, but even he could feel the withering atmosphere that encompassed it.

Compared to the previous world, this one was a hellscape. Damien couldn't help but wonder what the relationship between those two worlds was, since they were shown to him in quick succession.

But before he could question it further, the scene changed once more.

Damien didn't know which world he was watching anymore. The current world looked like both of the previous ones, but at the same time resembled neither. The main difference was, it was embroiled in war.

The denizens of the world had joined together and taken up arms against an invading race that Damien was all too familiar with.

Their appearances varied, with some looking like grotesque monsters and raging beasts while others were far more humanoid. But they all shared the same inky black mana and sinister countenance.

What Damien was looking at seemed to be the final stages of the war. The allied forces of the indigenous races were close to being totally wiped out. But none of them had lost the flames of hope in their eyes. Regardless of the situation, they continued to fight.

When the scene changed next, Damien found himself inside a dilapidated city. The inhabitants of the city were having hushed conversations as they directed their attention towards a raised platform in the middle.

There, a man was giving a speech with a solemn look. Unfortunately, Damien couldn't hear what he was saying. But by reading his lips, he was able to get a minor grasp of the main topic.

Fleeing.

Abandoning the world and fleeing, finding a new world to inhabit and grow stronger. Enduring until they were one day strong enough to get revenge.

Damien unintentionally realized that this was a familiar situation to him. The Demon King Lucius had told him a similar story not long ago.

But instead of fleeing to a secret realm like the demons, these people risked fleeing into space. Damien wasn't sure which one was actually the safer option.

From the looks on the inhabitants' faces, Damien could easily tell they were unwilling. But somehow, the man on the platform eventually managed to convince them.

The inhabitants of the city boarded a starship along with many others from other cities. While those on the frontlines died in battle to protect their homeland, they left like cowards.

The next thing Damien saw was the ruins of a starship strewn across the starry sky. There were no signs of life in the vicinity, but traces of battle were present everywhere.

When Damien looked off into the distance, he spotted a familiar scene. It looked like the starship had almost arrived at another world before it faced destruction. Damien had seen this world from the starry sky once before, but it looked a little different in the visions now.

It was the Cloud Plane.

And soon after Damien came to this realization, the visions faded, leaving him back within his own mind space once again.

Chapter 327 Refining [3]

"Haa...haa..."

Damien's breathing was heavy as he tried to organize all the information that had entered his head. Even after witnessing it, he could only comprehend a general overview of the situation that he saw.

Unfortunately, he didn't have time to think it over. Once his mind returned to his mindspace, he immediately felt the rush of energy that had built up within his spiritual avatar.

He had naturally neglected the task he was supposed to be focusing on when he was submerged in the visions, and without his guidance, the spiritual energy within the flower had no direction.

It was only due to the Void Essence's suppression that the energy didn't leak and run wild, becoming wasted in the process.

'Forget it...'

Damien cleared his mind of all stray thoughts and wholeheartedly focused on refining the twenty-three petaled flower again. The spiritual energy that had been stored in his avatar slowly began to permeate his mindspace, filling it with a light greenish white hue.

Slowly but surely, the large flower shrunk until it became the size of a palm. As this happened, the fused spiritual land under its control slowly moved towards Damien's and began the process of merging.

Everything seemed to be going smoothly. So smoothly, in fact, that Damien felt there must be some hidden danger lurking within the current process. He refused to believe there was such a thing as a free meal in this world.

'Even if I can refine this flower without drawbacks, there are surely strings attached by whatever or whoever gave it to me to help me recover. Once I return to the outside world, I need to make sure to stay on my guard.'

Damien was able to free his mind of his total focus state now that the refinement had reached its final moments. There wasn't much energy left within the flower, so he didn't need to put as much effort into making sure everything was stable.

'The scenes I saw earlier...are they related to the flower? Or rather, the one who gave me the flower? Why did they show them to me? If they wanted to guide my thoughts in a certain way or even imply something, then they should've shown me more complete images. Maybe it was unintentional?'

Damien felt that it must've been the latter. It was the most logical conclusion. If some expert wanted to show him something important, they would have chosen better images for him.

For instance, the last thing he saw was the shattered starship, as well as a glimpse of the Cloud Plane. It was too vague to have a specific purpose to it.

If there was a purpose, they should've shown him the reason the starship ended up shattered, or something that'd actually give context to the story.

'Hell, they didn't even show me the faces of those inhabitants in that world. What is it with visions and blurred faces?'

Damien lamented. It wasn't the first time he'd been shown mysterious images. When he entered the space-time river back then, he had also seen something extremely vague and domineering. But thinking back, those images seemed far more related to him than the ones he had seen just now.

The common point was that the faces of everyone in those scenes were always blurred, making it so Damien couldn't even gleam the slightest detail that'd be beneficial in helping him decipher the scenes.

'But at least there's one thing I understand. Once again, I've become further entangled with those bastards.'

Another world that had been destroyed by the Nox. In his travels alone, Damien had come to learn about a total of three worlds that had been heavily impacted or destroyed by the Nox.

Although three wasn't a large number, it was different when put into perspective. The object of destruction was worlds. Every time a world was destroyed, billions of lives would be lost in the aftermath. Plus, even the total number of worlds Damien had visited so far was three, if earth was included.

'Did those survivors end up reaching the Cloud Plane in the end? Or did they die in the starry sky?'

Of the questions he had, this one was the most pressing. If those survivors were on the Cloud Plane, he needed to make contact with them.

'Actually, the flower should have some connection with them, since it showed me scenes of them. And for it to appear here, they should be relatively close. If it's like that, then it should be them, right?'

The elves.

Elves in a cultivation world. When Damien saw them, he wondered why such a thing existed. Although the knowledge he gained from novels on earth wasn't 100% accurate, it at least held some truth to it.

Earth was a strange place. Damien had long since understood that earth itself was part of some larger conspiracy. Earthen mythology and fantasy being based off of what he later learned was actually reality was the best proof of this.

From what Damien had seen, the most accurate part of that fantasy was the racial distribution between world types. In Apeiron, there were elves, demihumans, and dwarves, while in the Cloud Plane, there were mainly humans and mythical beasts.

If the elves were truly the survivors he had seen in the visions, he had even more reason to build a connection with them.

'At this point, I can no longer pretend like I only want to join the war for the sake of battle and fun. I've become too entangled with the Nox for it to be so simple.'

He didn't bear any major personal grudge against the Nox, nor was he a person who would say that he wanted to go to war with them for the sake of justice or righteousness. He had been slaughtering them without second thought just like they had been doing to others, so he had no right.

But he wasn't an immature kid anymore. He wasn't someone who just acted on desire like he did back when he was first coming to the Cloud Plane.

It was time for him to get serious about the coming war. It was time for him to start thinking realistically.

‘I need allies beside me. People I can entrust my life to.’

The connections he made in Apeiron, the Celestial Star Palace, White Dragon Grotto, Fire Phoenix Clan, and many more. He had already found people who fit these qualifications.

But his relationships hadn’t been strengthened to the point of unbreakable trust because of his flippant attitude in the past. That was something he now needed to change.

‘Ah, I need to deal with the Xue clan for Ruyue’s sake, so maybe I can make them submit. Also there’s that brat Long Chen. I wonder what he’s been up to with his protagonist ass.’

Damien smiled. There was no longer any point in deluding himself and avoiding the issue with the Nox. He was now extremely clear about his attitude.

‘Your existence threatens the safety of the people I care about. Your plans threaten the future peace and happiness I hope to achieve after everything is over. Therefore, you must be exterminated.’

That was all there was to it.

Chapter 328 Refining [4]

As his thoughts reached a close, Damien felt a refreshing sensation wash over his entire mindscape. The flower in his hands had been reduced to nothing, with all its energy having been refined by him.

Finally, his mind space began to show signs of recovery. The infinite void was gradually being filled with an aura of life.

The greenish-white essence that had permeated his mindspace slowly integrated with it and disappeared. Once the integration finished, the two fused spiritual lands merged and became one.

Voom!

It was like an engine being kickstarted. All of a sudden, the infinite void split open, causing light to shine down on the massive spiritual land that represented his consciousness.

The barren land was fertilized under the light, becoming filled with green grasses as if it was a massive plain. When the light finally died down, peace once again returned to Damien's mindspace.

"Wow..."

Damien marveled at the sight. His mindspace now looked like the starry sky. Countless shining dots littered the once empty space, filling it with color.

Damien felt that he could now traverse past the amount of space he previously thought was present. And he immediately did so. His spiritual avatar left the spiritual land he was situated on and flew into the starry sky.

“This is...”

The starry sky was indistinct. All of the so-called stars didn't have substance, being mere flickers of light and nothing more. Or at least, that's what Damien originally thought.

But within those many unsubstantial lights, there were a few that stood out. One was a blazing red sun, one was the hazy outline of a familiar world, and the last was a solid planet. The sun was obvious, it was the source of his sun flames that had become an integral part of his strength. As for the two worlds...

‘Apeiron and Earth.’

One was his starting point. If it wasn't for the dungeon on Apeiron, he wouldn't have reached his current heights. It was only obvious for him to have an inexplicable connection to it.

The second was his birthplace. The place he had called home for so many years of his life. And more importantly, it was the first and only world he had bound as a Celestial. On earth, he was a Star Master.

With the status of these two worlds taken into consideration, the levels at which they manifested also made sense. After all, his connection with earth was far stronger than what he had with Apeiron.

‘But for them to appear in my mindspace...it seems like there are still many things I have yet to explore about my Celestial class.’

Damien was excited by his future prospects, but now wasn't the time to think about it. With his spiritual world blooming into fruition like this, he felt like it was finally time for him to awaken.

The space he was in right now was his mind, so it wasn't that difficult to find the connection he had with his main body. The only reason he couldn't get any feedback from it before was due to the horrendous state his mind was once in.

Comparing the scene he saw when he first woke up in his mindscape to what he was seeing right now, Damien was finally able to get a true grasp on how bad his situation had been.

'In fact, that flower was really a lifesaver. Looking at the current scene, it would've taken far longer for me to completely heal my spiritual world if I had done all the work on my own. Perhaps even several years.'

Damien once again marveled at the power of a Demigod before concentrating his attention back on his link to his body. Soon, Damien felt a sensation as if he was traveling through a wormhole before his vision suddenly went black.

Thump! Thump!

His heart was beating, his mama was beating along with it. The warm and refreshing sensation of mana coursing through his body made Damien involuntarily smile.

Roar!

His bloodlines raged as if to welcome him back. His six senses were also unnaturally active.

‘Ahhh, it’s good to be back.’

This was the feeling of a living, breathing body. It was incomparable to the spiritual form he had spent the past few years in.

‘But...what is this situation?’

Damien soon realized he couldn’t move or open his eyes. When he sent his awareness out, he noticed he was trapped within a strange cocoon.

‘Greenish white, huh. It’s obviously related.’

Damien shook off his thoughts. He gently circulated his mana to allow his body to get used to it once again before pushing it forward in waves.

Crack!

Faint cracks appeared on the cocoon. Just like he had done back when he first entered the Primordial Undying Realm, Damien broke out of its shell and slowly stood up.

“Ngh...my body feels like it just woke up from a coma, but my mind is even more active than it was previously. It’s going to take a while to get used to it.”

Damien stretched his body, which emitted a series of cracking and popping sounds. It hadn’t moved for so many months, so it was only natural.

“Wait, shit. Didn’t my life force get forcefully depleted back then? Don’t tell me...I’m an old man now?!” Damien panicked.

“Fuck! I’m still a virgin! How is my wife going to agree to have sex with me if I look like a 60-year-old?! Fuck you, Demon God!”

Damien roared in rage as he rushed into the bathroom connected to the room he was in. He quickly arrived in front of a mirror to inspect his looks.

“Shi- wait, huh?”

What Damien saw in the mirror was in fact not the decrepit old face of a 60-year-old. Instead, he looked almost identical to before he had fallen.

Actually, he even looked slightly younger. Since Damien was approaching 23 years old with his time in the Trial World, his face had already started to carry a mature air, but now, he had regained some of the youthfulness he had when he was still around 20.

It wasn't a big difference, but it was a difference nonetheless.

"That cocoon must've had a similar effect to the flower I refined. Both my mind and body have returned to peak condition, so I should actually be able to get back into action right away." Damien mused. But in the end, he decided against it.

"I still have to get used to being awake again. Moving around in my actual body isn't anything like moving in my spiritual avatar after all. I don't know how long it's been out here, but in my perception, it's been years since I've last walked normally. I should familiarize myself with my body again before doing anything big."

With this thought in mind, Damien spread his awareness and finally got a look at where he was.

"This should be...Darknorth? Quite the distance away from Acier. Must've been the handiwork of those two girls."

Damien smiled. How thoughtful of them to move him so far away. It clearly showed their consideration in taking care of him.

"Actually, speaking of them, where have they run off to?" Damien muttered to himself. Shaking his head, he left Darknorth and began the process of familiarizing himself with his body.

Meanwhile, the two girls he was thinking about were currently standing in front of a massive temple that had remained buried underground for untold centuries.

Chapter 329 Readjusting [1]

“Who would’ve thought that there was actually an inheritance here...” Feng Qing’er muttered to herself as she gazed up at the temple.

“Agreed. Plus, we definitely wouldn’t have even noticed this one by ourselves.” Qing Tan added.

It had been a total of three months since Damien entered his comatose state, and the deadline for Feng Qing’er and Qing Tan to find an inheritance site had long approached.

Unfortunately, two months wasn’t nearly enough time to scour the entire realm from top to bottom. Even after tirelessly searching, neither of them made substantial progress.

“At most, I was able to find the ruins of already claimed inheritances from the previous openings.” Feng Qing’er continued in vexation.

It would’ve been fine if she hadn’t found anything at all, but finding ruins and suspected inheritance sites only for them to already be claimed was far worse. She was annoyed to no end.

Even Qing Tan was the same. She had found clues pointing to more than a few inheritance sites, but she didn't have the time to actually pinpoint their locations.

And when the two month deadline approached, the two of them dejectedly headed back to Darknorth.

But who would've thought that on their way back, they'd run into each other? Not only that, when they regrouped, they found yet another clue to an inheritance site.

Following said clue, they arrived at the spot that was currently occupied by a great temple. Only, it used to be flat land. If it wasn't for a mysterious greenish-white speck of light that briefly flashed from the ground, they wouldn't have noticed any abnormalities.

"I don't like this feeling of being led by a string." Qing Tan said. Only an idiot would chalk up the earlier series of events as a mere coincidence. Especially when it was these two girls who had seen that greenish-white light before.

"I can't argue with that. But still, the source of that light has always been helping us rather than trying to cause harm. First, it healed that bastard's body, and now it has helped us achieve our goal. At this point, we can only accept this help." Fang Qing'er sighed.

"Still, though!" Qing Tan huffed. "Forget it. Now that we have this location, what do we do?"

"Of course, we publicize it. Isn't that the only way to continue our plan from here?"

“True, but it’s a shame to share this cake with others when we can swallow it ourselves.”

“Don’t think like that. We don’t know what’s inside this temple, so how can we say that we can digest it alone? It’s better to be safe, especially with what happened to that guy.”

“Right...” Feng Qing’er took one last look at the temple before flying into the air.

“Stay here and guard the place. We don’t know if it’ll disappear once we leave. I’ll start spreading the information.”

Leaving those words, she vanished into the distance. Qing Tan watched her receding figure as a small smile crept up her lips.

“Things are getting interesting now...I wonder if that guy has woken up already? This is the final event, after all! How can we proceed without our main character?”

“Well, it’s fine~. After all, the hero always arrived last, right?”

Qing Tan’s eyes became unfocused as she stared into the sky.

“But, I wonder how you’ll act now? Nothing has gone your way ever since that guy decided to intervene. Even after you personally acted, he still remained alive. I’m sure you’re feeling extra pissed off right now...ahh, if only I could see that expression, I could die happily.”

As the smile on her face grew, Qing Tan’s eyes became focused again. Soon after, she sat down in place and began cultivating. Now, she needed to pass the time until the involved parties all arrived.

A shocking piece of news soon spread through the Trial World. It was the emergence of an inheritance of unknown value. The only reliable information was the fact that it definitely belonged to an expert.

Everyone was riled up, even the mortals who resided in the Trial World all their lives knew the significance of an inheritance appearing. Only, they couldn’t do anything but lament at their own powerlessness.

The Trial World’s environment simply didn’t give them the ability to become powerful.

However, it was a different story for others.

“Are you going?”

“Going where?”

“Don’t play dumb with me! Hmph, I’m setting off right now! I don’t care if you come along!”

“Wait, wait! I’m coming! How can I miss something so big?!”

Various similar conversations happened around the Trial World as the news spread. Many questioned its veracity, but upon learning that the news originated from Feng Qing’er, their doubts were immediately settled.

The Fire Phoenix Clan was well known throughout the 3000 Beast Mountain Range. Simply by relying on their name, they could get others to trust them. But the Phoenix clans were unique in that their sincerity and generosity were highlighted on many occasions.

As the Young Miss of the Fire Phoenix Clan, Feng Qing’er’s words carried weight. She knew this, and it was the reason why she decided to spread the news instead of leaving it to Qing Tan, who was known to be cunning and untrustworthy.

The news spread like wildfire, proliferating through the 5 human cities and even reaching the ears of the geniuses who had secluded themselves in the wilderness to hunt. In this kind of situation, the demons in Acier naturally heard the news as well.

Within the pantheon in the fifth layer of Acier, the four remaining Apostles conversed about the news they just received.

“It could very well be another trap, but judging from the reaction of those outsiders, the news shouldn’t be false.”

The speaker was a lanky man whose body looked like it’d be swayed by the slightest of wind, but anyone who knew him was aware of the frightening power he hid in his small frame.

“Proto and Nali are dead as we expected. Getting rid of Proto was a good choice since he would inevitably ruin any plans we had in the future with his brashness, but losing Nali as well is a shame. Now that there’s only four of us left, we need to take extra care with any moves we make.”

A woman responded. She had a long cat-like tail and vertical slits for pupils. Everything about her screamed the word cunning.

“Regardless, we still must go. Most of us weren’t alive when the previous batch of outsiders arrived in our domain, but we’ve seen the records from our predecessors. Any inheritance that has been found so far has been a great boost in the strength of the inheritor. If we let those outsiders get their hands on it, we are basically asking for death.”

“Indeed. This is a matter that concerns the survival of our race and the continuation of our Lord’s plans. We cannot fail this time no matter what.”

“Alright.” The final of the four spoke after listening to the rest’s conversation. His voice was low, like the growl of a beast.

“We’re going all out this time. Gather all of our remaining forces.”

The other three looked at him with widened eyes.

“All of them? Doesn’t that include...”

“There’s no need to question it. I said what I said. Haven’t you all realized it already? Every time we decide to preserve our forces, we end up eating a loss. Even if those Captains and Generals can’t help us in combat, they are perfect meat shields and sacrifices to help us continue forward without wasting our energy. As for combat power...”

He didn’t need to finish his sentence. They all understood his intent.

This time, they were mobilizing the Demon Kings.

Chapter 330 Readjusting [2]

“Phew, finally back to normal.”

In a quiet field located far away from any civilization, Damien let out a sigh of relief. After many days of continuous effort, he had readapted to his body.

Truthfully, it wasn't as hard as he originally expected, though he shouldn't have been surprised considering how he had bolted to the mirror right after he woke up without any trouble.

In terms of readjustment, it only took a few hours for him to complete it. The rest of the past few days were used to familiarize him with the improvements he'd made during his coma.

"When it comes to my physical body, it doesn't seem like there have been many changes besides the fact that I gained a bit more vitality than I had previously. Instead of losing years, I actually seem to have made a net gain in lifespan through this experience."

Although there were some minor benefits to his physical body, it wasn't anything special. It was only the natural strengthening that was gained when his body was broken down and reconstructed.

But since it wasn't a targeted reconstruction for growth and was instead entirely focused on healing, unlike the magma bath he took when he first entered the secret realm, there wasn't much benefit.

The true benefit was to his spiritual cultivation, something he didn't even know existed until recently.

The work he put into repairing his broken spiritual world, as well as the refinement of the twenty-three-petaled flower, had greatly boosted his mental power.

"It's a shame that I can only do some basic stuff with all this power. Especially with the fine control I gained through my years of effort, it'd be a great trump card if I could use it properly. Looks like I'll need to consult some people and learn some mental skills after I get out of this place."

Currently, the only mental skill he had was his Mind Prison. This skill was meant to be used to put him into an emotionless state so he could perfectly practice the Void Heart Sword Law, but Damien had found that such a usage was a waste of the construct's potential.

From helping him regain his mind when he was up against the Demon Queen's seduction to helping him preserve his ego when his mind was on the verge of breakdown, the Mind Prison was such a versatile skill that Damien felt the need to punch its creator for using it so inefficiently.

"As a matter of fact, I should probably start looking into the actual Sword Law part of Void Heart Sword Law. Even if I don't agree with the whole emotionless thing, it'll probably still be helpful. I might be able to integrate it into my Void Sword Art to enhance it."

Damien thought back to when he first obtained the Void Heart Sword Law and couldn't stop himself from chuckling.

"Man, I was really on something back then. I'll have to give Ruyue some love when we reunite as thanks for helping me come out of that self-destructing state. If it wasn't for her, who knows what kind of terrible mistakes I would've committed."

Damien smiled as his hand went to his chest. There, he felt the faint rhythmic thumping of a heartbeat that wasn't his.

"I wonder how you're doing right now? I truly hope your Trial World doesn't have the same demon troubles I'm having right now. Still, at least I know you're safe...no, since your heartbeat is so calm, you're probably thriving. As expected of my woman."

Before his mind was shattered, he could only vaguely feel Ruyue's physical condition through the piece of her soul that she had given him, but during the process of collapse, a strange mutation took place in the imprint she had placed on him.

As if acting to preserve itself, that portion of Ruyue's soul had escaped his mind space and taken root in his heart instead.

At that time, his body was being reconstructed inside the greenish white cocoon, and that portion of soul had ended up fused with his heart.

Through such a strange set of coincidences, Damien and Ruyue's hearts had become interconnected. He didn't know what kind of effects such a mutation would have, but he could only slowly find out once he reunited with the woman herself.

"Damn, it's tough being a sentimental guy like me. What a shame..." As he spoke, Damien started feeling like he was forgetting something. Going through his memory of what happened before his coma, he suddenly remembered.

"Ah! I put a whole bunch of people inside of the Sanctuary and then basically died! I should probably go check on them..."

Luckily, he had remembered before it became too late. Those guys were probably incredibly confused about what had happened in Acier and during the months afterwards, since he had been broadcasting the situation.

Thinking about how he had bragged to Demon King Lucius before everything went downhill, Damien suddenly felt a bit embarrassed.

“Forget it. Thick skin is something every man needs to have. Nearly dying? Hmph, look at how I’ve improved over this period of time. Of course everything was according to plan. How could I predict a Demigod descending? Naturally, I’m just built different.”

Damien puffed out his chest and entered the Sanctuary with confidence. Before he went to visit the ones residing within, he stood in the air and observed the layout of the place.

“Now that I look at it from a bird’s eye view, this place is seriously cluttered. I just keep sectioning off space every time I need something new, so it’s become a hassle now. Let me fix this before I go meet them.”

Damien focused his mental power and began restructuring the space in the Sanctuary. Currently, there were many clumps of random space that he had used for various one-time purposes, but he didn’t need that.

Instead, he merged all those spaces together and turned them into something new. At the same time, he restructured the existing spaces to make them more organized and fluid.

The Sanctuary soon experienced tremendous changes. Now, there was simply one massive continent that looked like its own plane, with little Xue’s space being merged with all the rest.

The only separated spaces now were one for prisoners and one for him personally.

The prison was straightforward, especially since he didn't have the talent to erect constructs within it. It was a barren plain where not even grass could grow. But that was just for the sake of atmosphere. After all, psychological warfare was its own game.

The main thing that differed was what Damien termed as World Principles. The World Principles were the laws that governed the space. Many things could be regulated by tweaking them.

For instance, within the Prison Realm, he mainly utilized Principles of suppression. Those within would find their strength taken from them while a constant aura suppression would weigh on their minds and bodies.

Other than that, Damien added a few more things that could be used for both psychological and physical torture, but those Principles weren't active at all times, they were like settings he could turn on and off as he desired.

As for little Xue's realm, or rather, the Main Realm, the World Principles didn't differ much from that of an existing normal world. It would be hard to differentiate purely based on the aura and feel of the realm itself.

The third realm was the same, with no major differences in World Principles from the outside world. It was Damien's personal realm for training and relaxing, and there was also a portion sectioned off for the sake of storage.

“Main Realm, Prison Realm, Personal Realm...I really need to change these names. Well, the latter two are fine but the main realm is basically a world of its own, so it needs a good name. Maybe I’ll consult some people about it later.”

Damien nodded in satisfaction. Now, all the people within the Sanctuary were in the Main Realm together. But Damien wasn’t worried about the demons harming little Xue. Even if the World Principles were naturally untouched, he could still manipulate them to suppress those he didn’t trust.

As an example of this, all the demons were basically no different from mortals at the moment, even the Demon King Lucius.

Damien clapped his hands in satisfaction. “Everyone must be confused at the sudden change, so this benevolent Young Master should go explain it to them!”

With a carefree smile on his face, Damien flashed away and appeared in the Main Realm, not far away from where the demons were situated.