

# Void 401

Chapter 401 30 Minutes [1]

"Hoo..."

Damien took a deep breath. He could feel the evolution of his body finalizing. It meant that within a few minutes, his 30-minute timer would begin.

[Are you prepared?]

'Is there any way for me to prepare for a situation like this?' Damien smiled wryly.

[Nevertheless, you do not look nervous. Your disposition is admirable.]

'Well, I just have to stop thinking about the negatives and I'm fine. I'm an expert at running away from my problems.'

[...]

'I'm kidding...well, partially kidding. I do have a plan, but I don't know how feasible it is until I try it. How long will I have before being sent out of the secret realm?'

[Will you collect the geniuses here? They are too preoccupied with their greed to care for your help.]

'Hmm, I don't care about the rest of them, but those three who took the green fruits are my comrades, so I'll take them out. As for the rest, sending them out normally is fine. Whether or not they survive is their fate.'

[I do not know whether to call you apathetic or mindful of the bigger picture. Regardless, I will not tell you how to live your life. All I ask is that you complete the favor I've asked for.]

'Senior, you don't need to worry about that. I'm not such an ungrateful person that I'd take all the gifts you've given me without repaying anything. Besides, I owe you a life-saving grace, don't I?'

Damien felt like he could see Alaric's smirk as he spoke.

[Your evolution has been completed. The blood rituals are also reaching their end. I wish you good luck in your future journeys. And please, get rid of the scourge that has plagued our universe once and for all.]

Damien nodded heavily. 'I'll listen to your words.'

In the next second, he found himself back in the Primordial Undying Realm. Even though three days had passed, skirmishes for the red fruits were still taking place. It seemed like it would continue until only enough geniuses to match the number of fruits were left alive.

But Damien didn't care about that. The instant he appeared in the real world once more. He teleported onto the green layer of the Primordial Undying Tree in front of Feng Qing'er.

"I have no time to explain, but I apologize in advance."

He put his hand on her shoulder and forced her into the Sanctuary. After his evolution from eating the purple fruit, the power difference between the two was too large for her to resist.

After finishing up with Feng Qing'er, he moved over to Lunaria and did the same. Finally, he appeared before Ruyue.

"Although I wish we could have a tearful and happy reunion, the circumstances seem to be hellbent on preventing it." He said wryly.

Ruyue looked into his eyes seriously. "You've matured since the last time we saw each other. I feel a little sad that I couldn't be there with you, but it can't be helped. As for the joyous reunion, we can have it once everything is over."

Damien smiled and nodded. Without any prior notice, he wrapped his arm around her waist and brought her to his chest, pressing his lips against hers,

"Until then, I can only leave you with this. Don't miss me too much while I'm gone."

Ruyue was too shocked to answer, but before she could regain her senses, she had been sent into the Sanctuary.

"Haa...that concludes things in here. Hun Fang and Qing Tan...it isn't the right time for me to take those two under me."

He could clearly see how discontent they were with their circumstances when he watched them through Alaric's eyes. But, it was more beneficial to him if they returned to the Nox for now.

"They're probably being monitored, so I can't act rashly. Next time we meet, let's see if I can properly save you from your fates."

Not even a minute had passed, but this was better for him. 30 minutes. The Primordial Undying Realm was an incredibly vast area that was as large as, if not larger than, the United States. To travel across that area multiple times within 30 minutes, he needed as much time as he could get.

He smirked to himself as he had the thought. 'Didn't I just acquire the perfect means to gain more time?'

A portal opened up in front of his body. Without hesitation, he stepped through it.

The fresh scent and vitality that filled the 3000 Beast Mountain Range filled his nostrils. The bustling streets of Taesi colored his eyes. He was finally back.

'I have no time to enjoy the scenery though. What a shame.'

His awareness spread to cover the entire city. Within moments, he was able to find the location of the Elf Queen.

Well, considering that her residence stood out from the rest, it wasn't too hard to do so.

'Won't they make a scene if I barge in? I guess Senior's seal will hell with that when the time comes.'

His figure vanished from the air, appearing in front of the Elf Queen's abode. Although he wanted to teleport directly inside, there was a powerful barrier stopping him from doing so.

He put his hand out and touched it. When he did, the seal reacted and shined with emerald green light. A gap was formed in the barrier, allowing his passage.

'Thank god. Going through the formal processes alone would've taken up at least a third of my time.'

He teleported once again, appearing in the location where he sensed the Elf Queen's presence.

When he reappeared, a blade was pressed against his neck.

"Who are you?" The Elf Queen glared at him. A powerful pressure enveloped his body.

"I have no time to explain." He responded. He held his hand up and flashed the seal on it. "What does this mean to you?"

The Elf Queen's blade wavered. At the same time, a formless domain enveloped the duo.

"This is...time distortion?" The Elf Queen muttered in shock.

"Ah, I'm on a time crunch, so it's necessary. But even with this, I've only extended my time limit to an hour so I can't chat much. So tell me, what does this seal mean to you?"

The Elf Queen put away her blade. Without hesitation, she got down on her knees and bowed before Damien.

"By law, the bearer of the Ancestral Seal can be considered the Lord and Master of our Southern Elf Clan and all other Elf Clans of the same origin. It holds the same power as a Progenitor of our race."

Damien marveled at the seal on his hand. 'Senior is really putting too much trust in me. What if I was a terrible person? Actually, I know for sure that I'd be a shitty ruler.'

But the "why" no longer mattered since the seal was already in his hands. It was just a matter of how he chose to use his newfound status.

"Gather as many as you can from your race within 10 minutes. Anyone who can't gather in that time will die."

"W-what are you?" The Elf Queen stuttered. If it wasn't for the seal on Damien's hand, she would've killed him instantly.

But the seal wasn't a mere representation of status. Damien just didn't know its power yet. In fact, because Damien possessed the Ancestral Seal, his commands could be forced onto the Elven Race. Even the Queen, a 4th class existence, would be forced to obey.

Not to mention, she wasn't allowed to take any hostile action against him. Such was the power of the seal.

But Damien was still in the dark about this. He didn't even pay attention to the Elf Queen's confusion. He was scanning Taesi to see if the rest of the Clan Heads who had come were still present.

'Tch. It seems like I'm forced to do some leg work...'

"L-Lord..." The Elf Queen hesitantly said. It still felt awkward for her to call someone else so formally, not to mention a boy that was far weaker and younger than her. "What exactly did you mean when you said all who don't gather will die?"

Damien clapped his hands. "Ah, right, I guess that's something that needs explanation. Hmm, what's the easiest way to say this..."

"In 30 minutes, the 3000 Beast Mountain Range will be razed to the ground."

Chapter 402 30 Minutes [2]

After leaving the Elf Queen with that frightening revelation, he was in no mood to continue explaining. After saying a few more words and getting her guarantee that she would follow his order, he flashed away, appearing outside of Taesi.

'White Dragon Grotto, Fire Phoenix Clan, and Ice Phoenix Clan. These are the three forces I need to save first. Senior Bai's forces and the Ice Phoenixes are both in Endless Snow Mountain so I'll go there first. Then, I'll go to Endless Flame Mountain where Qing'er's clan lives and circle back to Taesi. I don't know if I can do any more than that.'

If he was going to save anyone else, it'd be people he met on his way back to Taesi, if he had the free time to do so. At least with these three forces, he could guarantee they were trustworthy enough to take under his wing.

His figure was almost wholly incorporeal. The movements of everything around him had been halved in speed as if they were living in slow motion.

It was the effects of the pseudo-domain that surrounded him. At his current level, he could only double the flow of time around him, which in turn made the outside world flow at half his own speed.

When accompanied by his rapid movements through the folds of space, his speed was incredible, to the point where only an experienced 4th class like the Elf Queen would be able to follow it.

Taesi stood at the direct center of the mountain range, while the Endless Snow Mountain was close to the outskirts. Even with the White Dragon King's top speed, it'd take at least an hour to travel between them.

'But, I have a pretty convenient skill for this occasion, don't I?'

[Warp]

Space shattered in front of Damien as a portal formed. When he stepped through it, he could see the familiar scenery of the White Dragon Grotto's Snake Level around him.

His awareness spread to encompass the Grotto. In the same way that he found the Elf Queen, he located the White Dragon King.

His figure flashed away, appearing in an unadorned stone cave that he had been to once before.

"Senior." He called out to the white-haired man that sat in the center of the cave.

The White Dragon King looked up in surprise. "Kid, it seems you've grown a lot since the last time I saw you. In more ways than one."

"Although I appreciate the compliments, now isn't the time for idle talk. Senior, didn't you say that your son was living in the outside world? Don't you want to go meet him?"

The White Dragon King's eyes narrowed. "Brat, explain yourself."

"I can't explain everything, but I can tell you this much. The mountain range will be destroyed soon and the Myriad Illusion Veil will fall along with it. Even your power isn't enough to survive the coming calamity. So Senior, please gather your forces within the next 10 minutes."

The White Dragon King stared into Damien's eyes. Seeing the seriousness they carried, he couldn't treat the latter's words as the ramblings of a child.

"How certain are you?"

"Of the destruction? 100%. As for escaping, as long as you can entrust the lives of you and your people to me, that's also 100%."

"Can you swear it on the Heavens?"

"I can."

Without hesitation, Damien swore an oath to the system. With this kind of guarantee, there was no way the White Dragon King could continue to doubt him.

"10 minutes, right? Very well. All of my forces shall be gathered within that time. Since we were never a large clan to begin with, it should be relatively easy."

"Many thanks, Senior. Can you point me in the direction of the Ice Phoenix Clan? I must visit them next."

The White Dragon King nodded without asking questions and gave Damien the location he needed. After giving one final thanks, Damien vanished again.

'Using my Time element without pause is really putting a strain on my body...I need to get used to this power before I can abuse it the same way I do with space.'

He could already feel the fatigue setting in from keeping his pseudo-domain active. And that wasn't even counting the rapid drain on his mana.

'But my mana capacity has grown so much that I can't even feel its end right now. I should check my status soon and see it quantified to get a better understanding.'

But just like everything else, now wasn't the time.



Although he had somewhat overcome the spatial restrictions within the mountain range, he still wasn't completely free from its effects. Only because of this did it take 10 minutes for him to reach the Ice Phoenix Clan's palace.

But he was a little glad for the time he gained, since he was able to use that time to communicate the current situation to both Feng Qing'er and Lunaria.

Without their help, convincing their respective clans would take far too long.

With Damien's current ability, he was able to intrude upon the Ice Phoenix Palace without being detected by anyone except the Matriarch.

And the second he stepped into the palace, he summoned Lunaria from the Sanctuary.

The Ice Phoenix Matriarch appeared not even a second after he had done so.

"Luna? Why are you here? And so suddenly..."

"Mother, time is of the essence. Please trust my words as your daughter and the future Matriarch of our clan. Gather all personnel within 10 minutes."

"Very well. However, you must explain the situation while I do so."

The Matriarch glanced at Damien. Lunaria turned to him as well.

"I will stay with my mother and explain the situation. When you return, everything will be prepared."

Damien nodded solemnly. "Then, I'll head to the Endless Flame Mountain now. Do you know the location of the Fire Phoenix Clan?"

"I do, but for me to explain is arbitrary. You have Qing'er with you, don't you? Just ask her to guide you once you reach the mountain."

Damien almost smacked himself. It was truly idiotic of him to not think of it. But, he didn't waste time on being embarrassed. After giving a short greeting to the Ice Phoenix Matriarch, he once again began his teleporting frenzy.

'My affairs in Taesi and the Endless Snow Mountain have been wrapped up. As long as I can keep the pseudo-domain running, I should have another 45 minutes. But traveling to the Endless Flame Mountain and convincing the Fire Phoenix Clan will take around half an hour...'

If he didn't have the Warp skill to move between locations, it'd be impossible for him to complete things in 30 minutes. But since he did, things were simpler.

'Taking everyone into the Sanctuary at once...the elves' numbers will be in the millions, but I don't know about the two clans of the Endless Snow Mountain Range. Although it'll exhaust my mental power at a terrible rate, it should still be possible.'

Teleporting millions of people was impossible for him, but if it was teleporting them into the Sanctuary, it was many degrees easier. That is, if he was fine with leaving himself on the verge of death by the time he was finished.

'Haa...this is why I don't like burdensome things.'

Even as he complained, he made his way over to the Endless Flame Mountain.

He had 20 minutes remaining before everything would end.

Chapter 403 30 Minutes [3]

Damien felt extremely thankful for the relationship of absolute trust shared by the Phoenix Clan Matriarchs and their daughters. If it wasn't for this, it would've taken far too long for him to gain their trust.

But Feng Qing'er and Lunaria were generally smart people. With Damien's explanation, along with his pulling them into the Sanctuary, they were able to understand the severity of the situation easily.

After all, something like the Sanctuary was a card that Damien would never show to people he didn't have absolute trust in, and no matter how much Feng Qing'er didn't want to admit it, she knew she wasn't included in that group.

With Feng Qing'er by his side, Damien was able to gain the Fire Phoenix Clan's cooperation within no time just like how he had done with the Ice Phoenix Clan. Messengers and guides were dispatched in an instant to gather all their forces into the palace.

And while it happened, Damien used Warp to return to the White Dragon Grotto's Worm Level. After arriving, he immediately left the grotto. To gather all the forces it held in one place, the only option was to leave and utilize the space of the mountain it resides on.

And the scene in front of him was just that. Tens of thousands of dragonkin and a few hundred True Dragons lined up in an orderly fashion with the White Dragon King at their head.

"Are all the preparations done?" He asked as he arrived next to the White Dragon King.

"Yes. Everyone has been gathered and everything we needed to take has been stored in space rings. Now, show me how you plan to get us all out of the mountain range."

Damien nodded. "Senior, they probably won't listen to my words so I'd like you to tell them not to resist my mana."

The White Dragon King agreed. Using mana to amplify his voice, he passed the order down to all his subordinates.

Damien closed his eyes and concentrated. It was his first time transporting such a large number of people, but with his current capabilities, it should be possible.

'This is the smallest force among the four I'm taking in, so it'll be the best practice for when I have to do the same for the rest.'

His mana spread like a blanket and slowly moved through the crowd. Space distorted as a large amount of spatial essence congregated on the location.

Due to the rapid mana drain he was experiencing, Damien was forced to cancel his time pseudo-domain. It couldn't be helped, but it only made him rush even more.

His mana soon reached the very ends of the crowd, encapsulating the whole of the White Dragon Grotto's population within it. In that instant, Damien's eyes shot open.

Bang!

The sheer weight of his mana caused space to crack. Starting from the ones nearest to him, the dragonkin and dragons of the grotto began disappearing in the hundreds.

A stream of mana leaked from Damien and specially took care of the White Dragon King, sending him ahead of the rest so he could organize them once they were inside the Sanctuary.

At the same time, Damien sent a mental message to Lucius, using him to familiarize the new residents with the old ones.

From hundreds to thousands, thousands to tens of thousands, the residents of the White Dragon Grotto vanished in droves until finally, Damien was the only one left standing in the cold air of the Endless Snow Mountain.

"Haa...haa...how...annoying..."

He was short of breath from just this, so how was he going to deal with the other two? It seemed he needed to make more preparations.

His awareness spread down the mountain and he flashes away, appearing in a cave where a relatively large beast tribe resided.

"Although I want to apologize since you guys will die so suddenly like this, you were going to meet the same fate anyway so it is what it is."

He began a slaughter. The beast tribe couldn't even last a few minutes against his newfound strength before being devoured to replenish his stamina.

"Ahh, much better. Now all that's left is..."

Bang!

A large swirling black hole appeared behind his back, sucking in all the ambient mana in the vicinity. And once his mana was also brought back to its peak capacity, he used Warp and arrived at the Ice Phoenix Palace.

He didn't waste too many words. Since Lunaria had already been to the Sanctuary, albeit for a brief amount of time, she had roughly explained it to her mother.

The same process repeated once more, but this time, the number of people had increased to over a hundred thousand.

Although the amount of pure-blooded phoenixes wasn't larger than a few thousand, the lesser phoenix variants were of a far greater number.

The Phoenix Clans were prideful, but they were also benevolent to a fault. They didn't look down on those lesser Phoenix variants but instead took them under their wings.

Because their pride also encompassed giving a home to those who had been born of their blood and lineage.

By the time Damien was finished transporting the Ice Phoenix Clan and their subsidiaries into the Sanctuary, he was far more worn out than he was when he did the same with the White Dragon Grotto.

If it wasn't for him replenishing his mana and stamina to their full capacity beforehand, it would've been impossible.

And just like before, he found a beast tribe to slaughter for his nutrition. But the size and number were great enough to be called a clan at this point.

'And just like that, I've exterminated whole clans like it's nothing...I'm really becoming a monster.'

But for the sake of his goal, it was necessary. And when he considered that these clans would all be naturally exterminated as collateral of the battle to come, he no longer felt any remorse for his actions.

Instead, he focused on recovering himself and returned to the Fire Phoenix Clan's palace.

It was taking too long.

To transport the two clans of the Endless Snow Mountain and recuperate from his fatigue, it had taken around 10 minutes.

Including the time he had spent already, he only had around 10 minutes left until his deadline.

'I'll be cutting it close...no, I might not make it in time...'

He couldn't focus on it. He could only rush with everything he had to complete his task. If he focused on the deadline, the situation would feel too hopeless for him to stay as motivated as he was now.

So he repeated the process.

He transported the Fire Phoenix Clan to the Sanctuary and slaughtered another beast clan to sustain himself.

But it wasn't enough. He traveled around the Endless Flame Mountain for as long as he could within his time crunch and slaughtered multiple beast clans, using his Void Physique to stock the excess energy he gained instead of immediately using it to replenish himself.

After all, from here on was where it got serious.

The three clans he had taken in so far were large enough to be prominent even in the entire 3000 Beast Mountain Range, but when compared to the population of elves present under the World Tree, they were nothing.

After all, while the numbers he had transported so far totaled around 300,000, the number of elves was well into the millions.

Chapter 404 30 Minutes [4]

Warp was truly a lifesaver of a skill. It was the skill that allowed him to return home after his years of suffering in the dungeon all those years ago, and it was the skill that was currently allowing him to overcome his predicament.

He arrived at Taesi with only 5 minutes remaining of his time limit. And he knew for certain that he wasn't going to get any extension. There was a reason why Alaric told him to leave when 30 minutes struck exactly.

But the Elf Clan was simpler to handle because of his seal. The Queen, although unwillingly, had already subordinated herself to him. Therefore, he could expect smooth sailing when it came to their transport.

When he arrived at the Queen's villa, the sight of millions of elves crowded into the packed space appeared in front of his eyes. It was the first time he had seen such an unfathomable number of people in one place.

But instead of adoring such grandiosity, his eyes went to the trunk of the massive World Tree that towered over them. Signs of spatial fluctuation and cracking had already begun spreading on it.

“Queen, there are already others in the place I’m sending you to. They’ll explain the situation. Judging by the size of Taesi, there should be more than enough space to accommodate everyone, but I still need you to keep order among them and make sure things don’t go wrong.”

Although the Queen didn’t understand much of what was happening, she had no choice but to nod. While to Damien, having the Ancestral Seal was extremely convenient, it was an unfortunate day for the elves.

Because, unlike the others, they were given no explanation and no time. Their treatment was comparatively worse, even though their status as his subordinates was technically higher than that of the other three clans.

Without any words, he transported the Elf Queen, her personal guard, and her family into the Sanctuary. After that, he began with the rest of the elves.

4 minutes remained.

Thousands of elves disappeared every second, but when compared to the total number, it was nothing.

Damien pushed his mana to its limits. Even with all the evolutions his Ananta Matrix had gone through, it was being overloaded by his struggle.

Devour activated subconsciously, forming a massive black hole behind his head that sucked the ambient mana and even vitality of the World Tree into his body. At the same time, the essence he had saved in the Void Physique slowly permeated his body and healed it.

His skin cracked and blood flowed out. His eyes went bloodshot, but he still gritted his teeth and continued.

3 minutes remained.



Thousands became tens of thousands. Within the minute, a third of the total elves in the area had been evacuated to the Sanctuary.

'It isn't enough. I need to do more. If not, they'll die here, and I'll die with them. If I die, everyone in the Sanctuary will be stranded without a way out, and they'll eventually die as well.'

The burden of responsibility on his shoulders felt especially heavy, but it was that same burden that allowed him to continue without care for his own condition.

The blood leaking from his body pooled on the floor and formed a stream that ran through the streets of Taesi.

And at the same time, the blood in his body began boiling.

'Since I'm inadvertently pulling vitality from the World Tree, I should be able to do this much...right?'

His blood vitality began burning at an astonishing rate to help cope with the burden he was carrying. When that happened, the numbers he could transport also vastly increased.

2 minutes remained.

Hundreds of thousands of elves were vanishing as the seconds passed. With the rate things were going now, it seemed he would complete his task on time.

1 minute remained.

The millions that had once occupied the square had been whittled down until their number was countable. And finally, they all vanished into the Sanctuary. With them gathered in a place where he was essentially God, he was finally able to understand their sheer number.

8 million. That was how many elves he had transported into the Sanctuary over the span of 4 minutes.

But in return, he was quite literally on the verge of death.

It was worse than any near-death experience he had before this. And funnily enough, he had reached this state by his own hands.

His skin was cracked like shattered glass and the blood pool beneath his feet had risen to the level where it submerged his ankles. His blood vitality was nearly exhausted. It was vitality that couldn't be replenished through normal means. In essence, he had sacrificed his own lifespan to finish his task.

When he calculated it, he let out a dry chuckle.

'5 years...my natural lifespan ends in 5 years...what a cruel fate.'

But he had prepared for it from the start. If it wasn't for the fact that the purest source of vitality existed in front of his eyes, he never said would've done such a thing.

His figure flashed away, appearing at the trunk of the World Tree. He put his hand on that trunk and said a single word.

"Devour."

It wasn't mana nor essence that he gained from the World Tree. It was pure unbridled vitality. The vitality that had allowed this tree to live for over a hundred thousand years, the vitality that allowed it to survive a clash between Demigods.

That pure vitality spread through his body and invigorated his cells. The blood vitality he had lost previously was replenished slowly.

30 seconds remained until his time limit ended. From his calculations, he had only gained back about half the lifespan he had sacrificed.

But even that added up to a few thousand years. Compared to other 3rd class existences, his vitality was far more substantial.

15 seconds remained. He leeches as much vitality as he could as time ran out, even using his pseudo-domain to extend that minute past its capabilities.

According to the mission he was given, he should be using this time to save more lives, but he wasn't so noble as to do that.

He was nothing like Alaric, who had sacrificed his everything for the greater good.

But perhaps it was due to their conflicting natures that he had so much respect for the senior. For a man who was able to be a hero, something he could never be.

'But a hero isn't the only thing that's needed in these trying times. Heroes will rise up to save the people, sure, but I won't be one of them. Instead, I'll be an executioner that slaughters everything in sight so that those heroes can do their jobs properly.'

5 seconds remained of his deadline.

He looked up at the World Tree that was already manifesting signs of a portal. He looked at the 3000 Beast Mountain Range that held the most beautiful scenery he had seen in all his years of life.

And he sighed.

'To all those souls who will be lost in the coming cataclysm, I hope you can find peace. And I'm sorry I wasn't able to provide you with safety.'

With a final bow towards the World Tree and the mountain range that had provided him with so much, Damien vanished into the Sanctuary.

OOOOOOOOOOH!

And the last thing he heard as he did so was the terror-inducing bellows of an unimaginable beast.

#### Chapter 405 Heaven-Shaking [1]

The ambiance of the 3000 Beast Mountain Range broke in an instant.

A hole was shattered in the trunk of the World Tree, and in its place stood a portal shining with black and white light.

OooooooooooooH!

As if responding to the appearance of the portal, thunderous bellows rang out from a select few mountains. But even though the number of bellows was small, their volume was enough to shake the entire mountain range.

BOOOOOOM!

At that moment, the Endless Snow and Endless Flame Mountains burst into rubble. From their peaks all the way down to the foundation that rooted them to the ground, black tentacles sprung out and destroyed the land.

The screams of those who lived on those mountains were drowned out by the sound of their destruction.

Millions of tentacles sprung forth from the rubble of the mountains, clutching onto the ground around them and hoisting the body they were attached to out of the abyss that stood below.

4 massive black masses appeared not long after. Each one had hundreds of thousands of tentacles. Their appearances were grotesque, like a slime that was chimera'd together with the body parts of various random beasts.

They were the Heaven Swallowing Beasts that resided under the mountains, the ones Damien ran into when he first entered the Endless Snow Mountain, and the ones thought to be the protectors of the mountain range.

But their current actions were totally opposite of that role.

Within the Primordial Undying Realm, the various ritual sacrifices met their end, leading to the deaths of all remaining powers inside. And within the main realm, Hun Fang and Qing Tan stood in front of a portal.

Their gazes were filled with pity towards the geniuses left in the realm. But in the end, they simply shook their heads and walked through the portal. They had no other choice.

Qing Tan sighed inwardly. 'Even though the chance of it happening is negligible, I hope you can survive through this catastrophe.'

While they disappeared, the foundations of the Primordial Undying Realm began to crumble.

[KAKAKAKAKAKAKA!]

The Nox Demigod's uproarious laughter rang throughout. And the void in which he and Alaric had resided for a hundred thousand years was shattered.

A wisp of black light exited through the portal in the World Tree. It zipped through the 3000 Beast Mountain Range in an instant, arriving in front of the Heaven Swallowing Beasts and submerging within one of them.

It was the Nox Demigod's soul.

After a hundred thousand years, his body had already been destroyed and refined into the secret realm. Just like Alaric, he was forced to take drastic measures.

And what better measure was there than massive beasts who had power matching the caliber of his soul?

If it wasn't for them, then the plan for his escape would've never been possible. After all, the body of a mortal could never house the soul of a Demigod.

Alaric watched it happen and sighed. Even if he had been preparing for this day to come, seeing so many beings sacrificed with only the slightest movements was still paining his heart.

But 100,000 years was enough to wear down his chivalrous spirit. He saw the birth and death of so many beings, and his view on life and death as a whole had shifted.

And so, he quickly removed the Primordial Undying Tree from the secret realm and merged it back into his main body before the secret realm collapsed.

The endless vitality of the World Tree, or rather, the true Primordial Undying Tree, seemed to have multiplied exponentially.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The land around the World Tree was ripped asunder as roots thicker than airplanes emerged from the ground. The endless crown of the World Tree also extended, those tens of thousands of branches elongating and becoming prepared for action.

And as Alaric prepared, the Nox Demigod wasn't staying still either. The four Heaven Swallowing Beasts' tentacles latched onto each other, merging into one. Their main bodies soon did the same.

A creature that towered above even mountains appeared within a short amount of time, its grandiosity not in the least bit losing out to the World Tree.

On two sides of the 3000 Beast Mountain Range, two different colossuses radiating opposing auras stood facing each other. The sight could be seen regardless of where one was within the mountain range.

Panic spread through the beings who were caught between these two beings. Chaos reigned as they attempted to flee for their lives.

But where could they go? The 3000 Beast Mountain Range was sealed off from the outside world, which also took away any hope they could've had for surviving.

[This clash...I have been waiting for it for too many years.]

The Nox Demigod's voice pervaded the world. Just hearing it caused hundreds of thousands of weaker beasts to burst into blood mist.

[Indeed. However, this time, I have the capital to battle you on equal grounds.]

Alaric responded. Although he was also using his True Voice to speak, the damage to the surroundings had been consciously minimized by him as he spoke. As such, there were no unnecessary casualties.

It was the most he could do for those poor mortals who were forced into extermination by his negligence.

[You...]

He spoke once more.

[Even after all these years, I still have not heard your name.]

Even though it didn't have a face, the form of the Heaven Swallowing Beast seemed to change to resemble something akin to a smirk.

[Those of our race who have reached my level have a rule. Our true names are only ever told to those who we share blood with, and those who we have sworn to kill.]

[And I do not meet the latter requirement?]

[Perhaps at one point, I resented you. However, Old Fool, haven't these years changed our perspectives? This fight may be inevitable, but my grudge against you has faded with the flow of time.]

Alaric inwardly gritted his teeth.

[Whether your grudge has faded or not, mine still remains. If it weren't for you...perhaps I would have been able to return to my family, perhaps I would have been able to live my life in an era where I was welcome...]

[However, now I live in a world where I don't belong. A world where everyone I once knew would have died many generations ago. I did not bear this grudge when we first landed in our predicament, but it grew with time. It seems our perceptions of the time we spent trapped differ greatly.]

[Kakakaka! This is why you lowly beings are looked down upon by our great race. To have such concern and attachment is nothing more than a burden. As long as you have power, nothing else matters. Old Fool, you should understand my mind by now, am I wrong?]

[I have heard your pointless ramblings thousands of times already, but I will never understand the thought process of scum like you. Enough talking. Even if I die today, I will bring you down with me.]

[Kakaka! I am looking forward to how you plan to do so!]

And the instant those words fell, it happened.

A world-shattering clash that almost destroyed the mountain range in a single instant.

Chapter 406 Heaven-Shaking [2]



The roots of the World Tree, which had been standing in place for over 100,000 years, had already spread throughout the entire 3000 Beast Mountain Range. Their true number was uncountable.

And these exact roots had burst forth from the ground, swinging rapidly towards the millions of tentacles of the Heaven Swallowing Beast.

BOOOOOOOOOM!

20 mountains were razed in the clash. Most beasts living on the ground level of the mountain range had already been turned to ash.

The clash lasted no more than an instant, not even enough time to be called a second, yet it still caused so much damage.

But the battle wouldn't end in a single clash, nor were the two Demigods willing to waste any more time talking.

Millions of roots from all directions sprung into the air, painting the sky in a greenish-brown color. The aura of the World Tree swelled as if it was about to burst, casting a great shadow on the world below.

'Undying Spirit.'

After adapting to his new body, Alaric hadn't been wasting his time idly. He had created many techniques to match his new form and mana, since his old ones were almost all useless at this point.

When he activated the Undying Spirit, the vitality spread across the 3000 Beast Mountain Range was withdrawn into the World Tree. Instead of radiating freely, it encompasses the branches and roots that were used for attacks, becoming a strong armor that couldn't be penetrated by normal means.

Those millions of roots covered the Heavens as they plunged towards the Heaven Swallowing Beast.

The Nox Demigod covered his tentacles in inky black mana. Control and adaptation to his new body was the one disadvantage he had against Alaric, but in turn, he had a far greater mana supply due to having bided his time and power until this moment to strike.

BAAAAAANG!

The fortified roots clashed with the mana-clad tentacles once again. Pieces of both materials were ripped apart and crashed into the ground below, creating massive craters.

With every second that passed, thousands of clashes were exchanged between the two. Since their battle was taking place under so many constraints, they both were trying to end it as quickly as possible.

The ambient mana in the environment was starting to get influenced by the clash between Divinities. The environment itself seemed to match the disposition of these two beings.

Perhaps it was only due to the fact that their current forms restricted them so much. They didn't have much movement capability, if any at all. If it wasn't for that, the battle wouldn't have been contained so well within the mountain range like this.

The Nox Demigod was truly annoyed by his circumstance. If it wasn't for being unable to fully control his new body, he would've already won this battle.

But there was one thing he could use with confidence.

'Swallow...the Heavens.'

It was the bloodline talent of the Heaven Swallowing Beast, as well as its namesake.

The grotesque slimy mass began swirling like a black hole. A powerful suction force emanated, tearing apart mountains and the World Tree's roots as it swallowed everything in sight.

'Tch!' Alaric scoffed inwardly. Heaven Swallowing Beasts, they weren't exactly a species, but an overarching term for beasts that possessed the Heaven Swallowing Talent.

And such a talent, it was one of the best even when the entire universe was taken into consideration.

'I cannot hold back and allow this battle to draw out. I will be at a disadvantage the more it does, not to mention, the Myriad Illusion Veil will not be able to handle the stress.'

'Primeval Life Gate.'

The trunk of the World Tree split in two. From within the massive chasm that formed, a massive pearly white gate emerged. It was as if Alaric was inviting the Nox Demigod to Heaven.

But it was more apt to compare the move itself to hell.

When the gates opened, a sea of essence raged forth. Like a tsunami, that pure greenish-white Divine Essence flooded into the mountain range and encompassed everything.

The vitality within was no longer something refreshing and pure as it was once before. The way it was being used now, it was a poison.

The Nox Demigod immediately stopped using his Heaven Swallowing trait. Letting such vitality into his body was asking for a slow and painful death.

Instead, his mana bathed half the 3000 Beast Mountain Range in blackness.

'Return to Origin.'

Wap!

Whether it was the sea of essence, the World Tree's roots, or the denizens remaining in the half of the mountain range around the Nox Demigod, everything was banished to oblivion.

As if they never existed in the first place.

But the areas protected by Alaric's vitality and Life Essence were not affected by such erasure. Although a part of his Corrupted Vitality Sea remained, it had been reduced to a point where the Nox Demigod could deal with it.

But the pearly white gates didn't vanish. Instead of corrupted vitality, they began to spew out something else entirely.

Shining white beams of light emerged and stormed into the atmosphere like nuclear bombs. They rained down on the Nox Demigod's blackness like divine judgement.

SKREEEEEEEE!

The Heaven Swallowing Beast let out an inadvertent screech of pain. It was the first attack that had landed since their clash started.

Those odd beams of light ignored all common sense. Even when they randomly impacted a portion of the blackness, the damage they wrought was transferred onto the body of the Heaven Swallowing Beast.

[YOU BASTARD!]

The Nox Demigod roared. If it was any other attack, he wouldn't have been furious. But he recognized this one. This essence, it was infinitely similar to the essence that coated the arrows Alaric had struck him with all those years ago.

No matter how much he spoke about not having attachments and being indifferent, those 100,000 years he spent sealed weren't something he enjoyed at all.

The resentment he had burrowed in his heart so that he could proceed calmly with his plan of escape, it began bubbling up once more as Alaric provoked those old memories.

[Ha! It seems that even scum like you can make such an expression.]

Alaric scoffed. As he did so, he mobilized the roots of the World Tree. Coating them in that same shining white essence, he ceaselessly let off attacks.

And due to the unnatural property of that essence, he no longer had to aim for the Nox Demigod's main body.

The attacks landed anywhere. Even in areas behind the World Tree that weren't anywhere close to the area of combat. But without fail, the damage caused by that white essence burned into the Heaven Swallowing Beast, causing its size to decrease drastically.

[You...! You are already burning your lifespan to attack me!]

The Nox Demigod shouted as he realized it. It was a truly reckless move, something he never expected that his old enemy would pull. After all, with his current power, it wasn't necessary to do so as it was in the past.

But Alaric didn't mind the fact that his opponent figured out his trick. He was never planning to hide it in the first place.

[Did I not say it from the start? Even if I have to die today, I will make sure that you die with me.]

## Chapter 407 Heaven-Shaking [3]

Alaric's resolve wasn't anything new. It was the same resolve he had formed 100,000 years ago before his first clash with the Nox Demigod.

If anything, rather than fade with time, his determination grew as it festered for 100,000 years.

In truth, his desire to live had weakened too much. At this point, death was his wish. Whenever he thought about living in this world where generations had passed and the era had changed, he couldn't find it in himself to live on.

He knew nobody, he knew nothing. Although he was aware that another war with the Nox was on the horizon, he wanted to be selfish just this once. After living a life where he constantly sacrificed himself for others, he wanted to be allowed at least this much.

So without hesitation, he burned his life and turned it into essence to promote his attacks to a whole new level. When compared to when a 4th class did the same thing, a Demigod burning their life essence had a totally different meaning.

After all, Divinity wasn't just a status symbol or an increase in power. It was something far more profound and qualitative than that. To burn his life meant to burn his Divinity, his Laws, everything that made up the being that was Alaric Alfheim.

Those shining white beams continued to rain down from the heavens. The pearly white gates summoned through the trunk of the World Tree rose into the sky and flew at the Heaven Swallowing Beast, becoming an attack of his own.

Before the Nox Demigod could start burning his own life essence to compete, he had to end the fight. That was what Alaric was thinking as he moved with fervor.

'Soul Banishment.'

A new property was added into the light beams that were raining from the sky. With every successful hit, the Nox Demigod's Divine Soul was directly scorched.

OOOOOOOOOOH!

The bellows of the Heaven Swallowing beasts became even more ferocious. Half of the 3000 Beast Mountain Range was turned into a massive chasm that led thousands of kilometers into the ground by the sheer amount of mana radiating from his voice.

But with the current assault, the Nox Demigod couldn't do anything else to fight back.

He had been too disadvantaged from the start. And there was a reason for it.

These hundred thousand years, Alaric had been constantly using his power to maintain the Primordial Undying Realm and feed the subtree within it. At the same time, he had to use another portion of his power to reinforce the seal that kept the Nox Demigod trapped.

With this much wastage of Divine Power, it wasn't an uninformed guess on the Nox Demigod's part that Alaric was weakening with time.

But there was one thing he miscalculated.

Due to the events that led to his sealing, the Nox Demigod had never become aware of Alaric's true body. That is, he didn't know that his opponent had become one with the World Tree.

He assumed that Alaric was still in soul form just like he was, and that the subtree was something he created using his Divine Essence as a medium.

He had no way of guessing that the subtree was a legitimate portion of Alaric's body. Alaric had taken special care to make sure the Nox Demigod couldn't peer too much into the outside world for that exact purpose.

So while Alaric had indeed spent a hundred thousand years wasting his power, he had also been cultivating with his main body without the Nox Demigod's knowledge. And with the body of a World Tree that had evolved past its limits as a World Tree, Alaric had actually gained more than he had lost.

In the end, the Nox Demigod's oversight had led to the current situation.

And of course, it was always something Alaric had been planning for.

He was the one who kept the Nox Demigod on a leash all these years. He was the one who watched the 3000 Beast Mountain Range from around his body. He was the one who chose whether or not the Nox Demigod could peer into the outside world.

If it wasn't for his consent, how could his enemy ever learn about the Heaven Swallowing Beasts he could use as a body?

Alaric's kind heart had been tainted by the years, leading him to see the sacrifices of those who would die in this clash as a speck of dust in the vaster universe. But his original chivalrous spirit never disappeared.

Or at least, that was what he liked to tell himself. Perhaps, the reality of the situation was that he just wanted revenge on the man who has left him in such a sorry state, revenge on the one who had caused him to die a dog's death the first time.

But regardless of what his true motive ended up being, the task he had to complete remained the same.

The World Tree's crown shattered. The hundreds of thousands of branches and millions of leaves that made it up flew into the air as if they had wills of their own. Soon, those shining white beams of light impacted them heavily.

BOOOOOM!

A massive explosion rang out, ripping a gash in space that was thousands of kilometers wide. But instead of being harmed, the aura of those branches became ferocious.

'Time flows on like an unending dream.'

Accompanying his inward chant, a formless essence wrapped around the branches, causing them to go through myriad changes in an instant.

The youngest branches became more robust and reached their prime, while the older and more withered ones regressed to the same state.



It was a truly masterful showing of Time Laws that Damien would've killed to see.

After his preparations were done, Alaric moved the flying branches to form a massive chain seal in the sky. It exudes an aura of ancient profundity, as if it was something the mortal world didn't deserve to witness.

'Burn my Divinity, burn my soul. For the price of my life, eliminate the one I recognize as my greatest enemy.'

The chain seal spun rapidly. The vitality emanating from the World Tree started to dwindle at a shocking pace.

[W-What is that?!]

The Nox Demigod panicked. He had never seen something like the seal in the sky before. And from it, he could sense an aura of inescapable death.

[This...this is the ultimate technique of our Elf Clan. Regardless of where in the universe the elves are located, they will all learn this technique as they ascend to Divinity. I shall allow you to witness...the wrath of the World Tree.]

The spinning chain seal moved so fast that even with a Demigod's vision, it looked like it wasn't moving at all. Space ruptured around it and formed an ever-increasing void. The winds whipped and whistled, and a shining white light began to cover everything in the 3000 Beast Mountain range.

[Bastard! How dare you use such a cheap trick to kill me?! I refuse to accept it!]

The Nox Demigod furiously yelled. Using the time when Alaric was focused on enacting his seal, he put everything he had into burning his divinity.

The Heaven Swallowing Talent activated, sucking in all the mana and law essence in the atmosphere and creating a void space around him. The only mana left in the area was what was already inside his body.

And after he completed that, the Nox Demigod began to forcefully change the shape of the Heaven Swallowing Beast's body. The form of a colossus began to take shape. Humanoid arms and legs formed at a rapid pace.

Even before the appendages could fully form, the Nox Demigod pushed his Divine Power into them and launched desperate attacks at Alaric.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Those attacks ignored the concept of distance and punctured through the coagulation of essence that was taking place around the World Tree. They landed on the World Tree itself in an instant, rupturing its trunk and causing massive splinters to shower the environment.

But Alaric paid it no attention. He was already in the process of sacrificing his life, so what did it matter if his body was being destroyed? The remaining vitality of the World Tree was moved to protect Alaric's soul as he worked instead.

The trunk of the World Tree was shredded down within seconds, becoming nothing like the grandiose appearance it once held. If it was any other time, the Nox Demigod's win would have been imminent.

However...

[It is already too late.]

Alaric's voice came from the void. He spoke through the mana in the air, as the only form he had left was his soul.

The light that was gathering through the chain seal spread to cover everything.

Whether it was the remains of the Endless Snow Mountain in the north, or the Desolate Mountain in the south, it was all covered by the shining light.

To the point where the massive gash in space that eclipsed the entire mountain range was hidden within.

[OLD FOOL! EVEN IF I DIE LIKE THIS, THE UNIVERSE WILL BELONG TO OUR GLORIOUS RACE! KAKAKAKA!]

The Nox Demigod roared madly. Seeing the light that had already covered and started burning his body and soul, he readily accepted his death.

He wanted to say something grander, about how he would take Alaric to death with him, but since Alaric had been aiming for that since the start, he had no way to save face in this situation.

But he wasn't angry. He wanted to witness the day when the Nox ruled over everything, but he knew that day wasn't something he could ever see.

So he dreamed it instead. He put his desires into his voice and projected them into the Heavens.

And then, the second all things were covered in that holy light, it vanished without a trace.

Along with everything that was present within.

Cold and silent, like the endless fury of the elf who had cast it.

Chapter 408 Settling Down [1]

Unlike the scene in the 3000 Beast Mountain Range, the Sanctuary was enveloped in a completely different kind of chaos.

"Order! Order! Everyone make space!"

"Don't clutter around together! There's plenty of space for all of you, so spread out and get comfortable!"

The shouts of those who were trying to maintain some sense of decorum rang out loudly, but the chaos didn't cease with just that.

Millions of elves, hundreds of thousands of phoenixes, and tens of thousands of dragonkin now populated an area that used to have only a few tens of people within it at most.

And even though they weren't getting violent, it was only natural for them to be filled with unease after being transported to a completely different world with no knowledge of what was happening at all.

The Elf Queen sighed as she watched the ensuing chaos. Next to her was the White Dragon King and the two Phoenix Matriarchs.

"So what you're saying is, the entire mountain range is currently being destroyed in a clash between Divinities, and that boy somehow became the sole savior of all four of our races..."

Even as the words came out of her mouth, she couldn't fathom them at all. But seeing the scene around her, she couldn't help but admit that the boy who had become her Lord was more than just a little capable.

"Although we've been told the same information as you, none of us have seen with our own eyes what is happening, nor do we know the story behind it." The White Dragon King responded.

"Indeed. Even our daughters have only been informed of the situation by that boy. But it seems Qing'er trusts him with her life, so I have no reason to doubt the authenticity of his words. It's just that...they are children, after all. Saying the entire mountain range will be exterminated must be an exaggeration." The Fire Phoenix Matriarch added.

"Exaggeration?" A new voice joined their conversation. Behind them, a haggard Damien appeared from thin air.

"Even what I've said must be an understatement. Although I can't understand the power of Demigods at all, I at least know that they far eclipse the likes of you and me. Plus, neither of those two will be affected by the mountain range's natural suppression. I can only imagine the destruction they've wrought."

Although he was speaking to the four leaders, he was mainly talking to himself. He was truly worried about the situation outside.

A single swipe of that Nox Demigod's hand had been able to obliterate an area the size of America in the past.

He knew from Alaric that the Demigod would have at most 50% of his power upon escaping, but even that was enough to wreak havoc on the Cloud Plane.

'Can the Myriad Illusion Veil hold out? If it doesn't...'

He didn't want to imagine the possibility.

'I need to find a way to view the outside world from in here. Otherwise, situations like this where the dangers of the outside world are unknown will repeat themselves.'

Damien was the sole tether of the Sanctuary to the Real Plane. This had many benefits, but it came with just as many drawbacks.

For instance, his death meant that everyone within the Sanctuary would be stranded here forever, unable to leave regardless of their power level. And in the same vein, they could only leave the Sanctuary if he left first and opened the way for them.

This was the main problem now that he had so many people living in his personal realm. His life now carried far more value than it ever had before.

"How can you be so certain about what you've told us?" The Elf Queen questioned. Of the four, she was the most doubtful.

But it couldn't be helped. She was also the only one of them that had no prior relationship or connection with Damien at all.

Damien looked at her for a moment, scanning her from head to toe. Although her aura was gentle, her demeanor wasn't the same at all.

'But then again, this is the kind of demeanor a ruler should have. I have appeared out of nowhere and become the highest authority of the elven race, a position that she used to hold. It'd be weirder if she automatically submitted like Elitra did.'

"I understand. Although my authority is absolute, ruling through force has never been a good long-term solution."

"What are you—?" The Elf Queen started. But Damien didn't let her finish.

"Words are useless at this point so there's no need for more conversation. It's best if I show you, only then will you believe me fully. Perhaps you are still thinking of leaving the Sanctuary and repopulating the mountain range once things settle down, but I guarantee that possibility doesn't exist.

"Anyway, let us first calm the people and settle them in their temporary lodgings. After that, we can go see the situation on the outside"

Damien was using his own fights as a measurement. Usually, the fights would only last for a couple of minutes before they ended, with the maximum time being around half an hour. Of course, this was only in relation to when he was fighting a single opponent.

'A battle between Demigods should be far faster than anything I can do, but it's better to be safe. I'll give it half an hour before I go out.'

Damien teleported away to one of his secluded spaces. Out of curiosity, he opened a small crack to the outside world.

BOOOOOOOOOM!

The secluded space was instantly shattered. A wisp of Divine Essence had entered through the crack he made, collapsing the structure of the space at its very root.

'Shit!'

Damien immediately teleported into a different subspace. If it wasn't for his literal instant movement within the Sanctuary, he would've died in that explosion as well.

'Fucking hell! Demigods are Divinities after all...I can't believe that even after all the overestimating I tried to do, I was still underestimating them.'

Luckily, he had chosen an empty subspace that wasn't connected to the main realm to do his experiment, otherwise, he might've accidentally killed everyone he had tried so hard to save.

'Right, half an hour should be fine...no let's wait a whole hour...a day. An entire day should be more than enough time to guarantee our safety.'

Damien sighed and returned to the main realm. There, the four leaders were giving a joint speech to quell the unrest within their people.

He nodded lightly. 'The Sanctuary has always been massive. Not to mention a few million, even a few tens or maybe even a hundred million could fit here. The four clans should live in harmony from now on...unless the fire nation attacks.'

Damien snorted inwardly before quickly looking around and sighing in relief. It was a good thing that nobody was around to see his mildly embarrassing display.

'Anyway, building residences needs materials, and I need livestock as well for food. I know damn well these dragons have no plans of being vegetarians...but the Sanctuary can't create life, so I'll have to outsource. How burdensome.'

Damien rubbed his forehead. The more he thought about it, the more tasks he found that needed to be done in order to properly accommodate such a vast population of people.

'I can leave the authoritative tasks to the leaders that already exist, and Lucius can help with the more troublesome things. I just need them to give me a list of things I, as the one who will be living in the outside world, am specifically needed for.'

Damien nodded to himself. There was no need to do all the bothersome tasks himself when he had so many capable people around who could help him with them. Instead, he had another plan.

One that, in his opinion, took precedence over all else.

'Now, I finally have time for a touching reunion with my Ruyue.'

## Chapter 409 Settling Down [2]

Whoosh!

A light breeze flowed through the air, causing the field of grass that grew below to rustle and fill the otherwise silent atmosphere. It was cold, but not to the point where it was freezing. In fact, this level of cold only made the night sky above feel even more beautiful.

A glistening moon hung in the sky, surrounded by a field of stars. An assortment of various colors decorated those stars as well as they swirled around and formed constellations and the shape of galaxies.

In the middle of the calm and breathtaking scenery stood a man. His hair was so black that it almost blended with the night sky, streaks of silver running through it and being highlighted by the light of the moon. His face was sharp, but as his eyes gazed upon that very sky, his aura calmed and merged with the space around him.

Such was the scene that Ruyue suddenly found herself transported into.



'It's too unfair...' She lamented inwardly. When such a man and such a scene were combined and presented in front of her like this, how was it possible for her heart to stay still? She found herself in a trance watching his back.

They stayed like this for a few minutes before Damien turned around as if he had only just noticed her presence.

"How is it?" He asked softly. His gentle eyes seemed to pierce directly into her heart.

Ruyue smiled. "Although you made me wait too long for this day, I'll forgive you because of this."

"Ah, how can this be? After all this work, I won't get rewarded at all?" Damien replied, walking towards Ruyue.

Ruyue glanced at him sideways. "And how did you want to be rewarded?"

"How? Aren't you the one rewarding me? It would feel much more sincere if you decided for yourself."

Ruyue rubbed her chin as if she was deep in thought. "Hmm, you see, I am just the shunned daughter of a major clan. The only thing I can give you is a load of problems."

"Problems? A mere major clan, how can they compare to me?"

"Can you back up those words?"

"Of course I can. What, you don't believe me?"

Ruyue shook her head. "Believe! Of course I believe you. However, the problems of such a clan can hardly be considered a reward, don't you think?"

Damien nodded as well. "You're right. If so many problems are going to be put on my plate, don't you think I should get an even greater reward?"

He arrived in front of her. Ruyue was tall for a woman, so even at such a close distance, Damien didn't have to look down too far to meet her eyes.

Looking into those mystical eyes that were only inches away from her, Ruyue's breath quickened. "My money is borrowed from my Master, my status has been revoked, and I don't have treasures to give at all. What kind of great reward are you expecting from me?"

Damien furrowed his brows and spoke seriously. "Hmm, since you can't provide me an adequate reward, I guess I'll have to keep you by my side until you can properly compensate me."

"And if that day never comes?"

"Then it can't be helped. I guess I'll just have to keep you by my side for eternity."

"If it's like that, then I'll have to make sure that my debt to you is never paid off." Ruyue muttered under her breath.

"Is that so?" Damien smiled. He couldn't help but find their conversation a little tacky.

Between the two of them, there was no need to confirm their feelings or their relationship. The boundary between friends, or the boundary between senior sister and junior brother, they had all been crossed by the two long ago.

This conversation, he couldn't see it as anything other than them teasing each other. But it was still nice in its own way. Besides, seeing the rising blush on Ruyue's face, and the way her breath quickened when he leaned in closer to her, they were scenes he couldn't get enough of.

"Now that I look so closely, you really are a beauty, Senior Sister," Damien said slyly.

"Hmph! And you didn't notice before? Silly Junior Brother, don't you know how many men are pursuing this Senior Sister of yours?" Ruyue replied haughtily.

"Ah, what pitiful men. I must offer them my condolences when I see them." Damien sighed.

"And why is that?" Ruyue said softly.

Damien leaned in closer. His nose brushed against hers. "Of course, it's because I've already claimed this Senior Sister of mine as my own."

He closed the final gap between them, pressing his lips against hers. Ruyue didn't reject at all, snaking her hands around his neck and pulling him closer.

Their tongues intertwined and their breaths became one. Their lips didn't part until they were both short of breath.

Damien wrapped his arms around her waist and leaned backward, gently falling into the bed of flowers that they were standing on. And in the same motion, Ruyue fell cleanly on his chest.

Under the light of the brilliant moon and stars, the two embraced each other tightly, refusing to let go. The missing sentiments of a year of parting were poured out in whole.

"Ruyue..." Damien said between breaths. He was trying hard to control his urges. This moment, it was better to keep it romantic, instead of polluting the current blissful atmosphere with desire.

"Mm..." Ruyue responded lightly. Her eyes were half open as she leaned on his chest. Being embraced like this, being surrounded by Damien's unique scent, if it was up to her, she would choose to stay like this until the ends of time.

"Isn't it funny?" Damien continued. "When we first met, we were always at each other's throats. I never would have thought things would end up like this."

His eyes glazed over as he thought of those memories from when he first arrived at the Cloud Plane.

Ruyue smiled as well. "Indeed, I would have never expected things to be like this. Did you know how annoyed I was, Junior Brother? When you appeared out of nowhere and ruined my peaceful life, I truly wanted to skin you alive."

She giggled lightly when she thought of how immature she used to be. In but a year and a half, she had changed far more than she had in the years she had lived before that. And it was largely in part to the man in front of her. She once again found herself feeling incredibly thankful for his presence.

"Ruined?" Damien said in a pitiful voice. "How could you be so harsh!"

"Hehe, if you want me to stop, then stop me!"

"And how do you think I should stop you?"

"That answer...don't you know it yourself?"

Ruyue lifted her head off his chest and once again planted her lips onto his. Actually, it was the first time in her life that she had ever initiated a kiss.

Well, considering that her first-ever kiss was when Damien first took her into the Sanctuary, that much was obvious.

But despite being inexperienced, Ruyue was like a student eager to learn everything she could. So until the proud moon in the sky set and was replaced by the burning sunlight, she made sure to have Damien tutor her until her inexperience faded altogether.

#### Chapter 410 Settling Down [3]

Damien opened his eyes groggily. Unexpectedly, he had fallen asleep after he and Ruyue finished pouring out their longing for each other.

But it couldn't be helped. Even if he had used Devour to replenish himself, endlessly using warp and his incomplete time pseudo-domain while also teleporting millions of people into the Sanctuary, all within a time limit of 30 minutes, just thinking about it made his head hurt. Of course the fatigue he accumulated would be unimaginable.

As he came back to his senses, he noticed a weight on his chest. There, he saw the picture of a peacefully sleeping Ruyue.

"If this isn't a true representation of the phrase 'sleeping beauty', then I don't know what is." He muttered to himself as he gently brushed his hand through her hair.

"Mm..." Ruyue mumbled in her sleep. Her arms embraced him even tighter as she dug her face into his neck.

Damien almost failed to suppress his laughter. 'Ah, what a deep sleeper. What to do, what to do...although I have a great deal of things to do today, I guess letting this Senior Sister of mine get her beauty rest comes first.'

He relaxed his body and stared into the sky. The feeling of his hand moving through her hair, combined with the peace he felt now, it was especially comforting.

'The battle outside has most likely ended already. I need to take the Clan Leaders out to view the situation. On top of that, I should introduce Ruyue to Lily and Mei, and also get a general understanding of the situation that the four clans are in after settling down.'

The mundane tasks he had to do made him feel like he had become some kind of leader. He didn't want that position at all.

The responsibility that came with being a leader, although he was confident in handling it, he had no desire to do so. From the start, his goal had been to be free and unfettered. It was the lifestyle he strived to live.

At most, he was willing to be a spiritual pillar for people he was affiliated with, but even that was a role he couldn't fulfill. After all, spiritual pillars were heroes who would pull off miracles whenever times of trouble descended. And he was never someone who could do that.

Even this time in the 3000 Beast Mountain Range, he had just been a side character in the struggles that had been taking place before he ever arrived.

With the way Qing Tan and Hun Fang had established themselves in the 3000 Beast Record, it was clear that the Nox had been planning to rescue their Demigod from the Primordial Undying Realm for many years. Many corrupted forces were probably created for the Nox to use while they waited.

But even without Damien, Alaric would've foiled these plans on his own. His own plans ran far deeper than the Nox's did, even if his motive wasn't as grand.

In the grand scheme of things, Damien's presence only served to save a few more people who would've died in the clash. That was it.

But on a more personal level, he had gained so much that he felt his trip to the 3000 Beast Mountain Range was the most fortuitous opportunity he had ever received. He almost felt like thanking the assassins from the Eclipsing Shadow Sect for forcing him into such a situation.

'Damn, with everything going on, I almost forgot about those bastards. I should take some time to once again familiarize myself with what was happening in the outside world before I came here.'

Damien sunk into his thoughts. The Eclipsing Shadow Sect, the Void Heart Sword Law, Celestial Star Palace, and most of all...

'The Empyrean Dragon Realm...I totally forgot about that. Haa...how troublesome.'

As he was now, he had no desire to go on another secret realm expedition. The one he had just come out of was more than enough, and he didn't really lack anything at the moment either.

The treasures of a true Demigod like the Primordial Undying Tree were far more appealing than those of a dead sect.

'But, I still have to go. Rose and Elena should be heading there. That's really the only reason to go, albeit an important one. Oh right, I remember Tian Yang saying that the Empyrean Dragon Sect was at the direct center of the Cloud Plane as a whole...that could be useful.'

When it came to his adventures on the Cloud Plane, there was one more thing he needed to do. And that was, of course, to bind this world and make it his own.

Being in the direct center of the world would definitely give him a higher chance of contacting the World Core. He couldn't simply mine to where the Core itself resided like what happened on earth.

'Would the World Core accept me? A world with as much history as the Cloud Plane will definitely have a sentient World Core with far more intelligence than Earth's. Nah, it should be fine. With the current state of the universe, being bound to me is in the World Core's best interests.'

Damien sighed in exasperation. 'Still, I hope the Empyrean Dragon Realm isn't open for as long as the Primordial Undying Realm was. I have no interest in wasting a year of my life in a place where I can't gain anything.'

In the end, he shook his head. 'If worst comes to worst, Warp can even transport me across worlds, so leaving a mere secret realm shouldn't be impossible. As long as Rose and Elena gain what they need first, I can come and go as I please.'

As he thought of them more, his heart couldn't help but get excited. He had grown so much as a person from the time when they separated to now. He couldn't wait to proudly embrace the two of them and show them that he was now a man deserving of their love.

And realizing that the moment when he could do that wasn't out of reach now, a smile bloomed on his face.

"Mm..." a soft mutter reverberated through his neck. He could feel Ruyue's lips pressing against him and climbing up his neck to meet his own.

"You're awake?" He asked gently.

"Mm....just woke." She replied groggily. She finally reached her destination, giving him a short good morning kiss.

"For someone who only learned how to kiss properly last night, you sure are in love with the act of doing it." Damien teased.

Ruyue gently banged her fist against his chest. "How can I help it when the first thing I see in the morning is the handsome face of my, Xue Ruyue's, man? You're practically begging for it."

Damien chuckled. "Alright, alright. It's my fault for making my dear Ruyue crave me so much. But right now, it's time to wake up. After all, I have a present for you."

"A present?" Ruyue's ears perked up. But in the next second, she couldn't help feeling ashamed. "But I didn't prepare anything in return."

Damien flicked her forehead lightly. "Stupid, how would it be a present if I asked you for something in return? Now, wake up properly and come with me. I guarantee you'll be satisfied."

He stood up and held Ruyue in a princess carry. In the next second, the two vanished, leaving only the peaceful scenery of a bed of flowers beneath the shining sun in their wake.