

Void 42

Chapter 42

“Oh, look who we have here! What’s with that face? Don’t tell me you missed me so much that you’re too stunned to speak!”

In front of Damien stood a familiar pink haired ruby eyed girl. Compared to the first time they met, Damien had to admit that she was much more attractive now.

Last time, she was wearing plain clothes as if to disguise her status, but today, she was dressed up like Damien.

She had on a sleeveless top with silver patterns running along its surface and a pair of pants that matched. Her shoes were a pair of black boots. Although it wasn’t flashy, it was oriented for combat, and coincidentally matched Damien.

Looking at her curvaceous figure, Damien ended up stunned for a second, only to instinctively respond in kind.

“Yeah yeah I missed you so much, but I wonder who it was that couldn’t wait to see me and waited eagerly for me at the door?”

Katherine, still in disguise, was also momentarily stunned. Even if she had a slight transformation from their last meeting, Damien’s was outrageous.

From his outfit to his neatly tied hair to the cross-shaped earring hanging from his ear, he looked like a completely different person.

She also had a gnawing feeling that he was looking straight into her ruby eyes, completely unaffected by her disguise.

“Well,” Damien said in a questioning tone, “are we going to keep crowding in front of the door, or are you cool with leaving?”

Katherine similarly snapped out of her daze as her face was colored red. In reality, she had also just come out of the door from the wind training ground and happened to see Damien exit after her. In her rush to tease him, she had forgotten that they hadn’t moved.

As the two continued trying to get the upper hand on one another, they exited the pyramid and headed to a cafe. It had been 3 months since they last talked so there was plenty to catch up on.

Within a certain office in the academy, a middle-aged man with black hair and red eyes looked down from his balcony, his gaze seemingly seeing past the various structures that inhibited it.

“Ohoho, what an interesting duo. Especially that boy. It seems I should keep an eye on him.”

The training grounds were secluded areas that most people couldn’t peak into when they were occupied, but this didn’t apply to everyone. The man was an exception to that privacy rule.

“Ohoho, the elders are already scrambling to see who they should train for the upcoming event. Maybe I should get involved this year as well. After all, this is a special occasion.”

The man smiled as he went back to his desk, quietly continuing his work as he thought about the upcoming event.

Meanwhile, Damien and Katherine had just finished eating and catching up about the past 3 months. Zara had also left the shadows to join them. As they walked around the academy, their conversation landed on the Nexus Event.

“So, you’re participating, right? Or are you perhaps some old fogey pretending to be young?” Katherine asked, still attempting to win their teasing match.

“Please,” Damien scoffed, “I’m 19 right now I’m naturally a young and handsome genius ready to compete. If anything, aren’t you the old fogey here?”

“Hmph! Didn’t anyone tell you that it’s rude to ask a lady her age? Besides I’m not even that much older than you!” Katherine pouted but she was inwardly surprised.

She was turning 21 this year, making her a year older than Damien and she had one of the best nurturing environments one could hope for.

Thinking this far, she couldn’t help but wonder what his background was, but whenever the topic came up, he’d brush it off and change it.

“Anyway, I’m going all the way to the top in this event, so you better make it there too. I’ve been wanting to fight you since the moment we met.” Damien continued.

Katherine nodded her head with an eager look in her eyes. Although they could easily fight at any time, she understood his sentiment. In 5 months, they’d have immensely improved both their techniques and levels.

Also, from Damien’s words, it seems he wanted to fight for the 1st and 2nd place positions, which made it even more exciting. Just thinking about it made her blood pump as her eyes filled with motivation.

“You’re right! I can’t waste any time on a loser like you. It seems I should go back to training.” Not even waiting for a response, Katherine ran off.

Damien smilingly shook his head. ‘Well, I have to agree with her on that one. Training is what’s most important for these next 5 months. Besides the tournament, that secret realm sounds like a lot of fun. I have a lot of preparing to do.’

Damien hopped on Zara’s back as they flew out of the academy. He was going to train his sword art, so he needed open space.

He didn’t want to cause damage in the academy and be forced to pay for it. However, neither Damien nor Zara noticed a third presence tailing them with interest.

Reaching a secluded forest, Damien hopped off Zara’s back and pulled out his sword.

“Zara, I’ll be staying here for a while so don’t worry about me. You’ve been staying in my shadow and letting me take all the rewards for the missions we’ve been going on. Go get stronger while I’m here, I’ll wait for you and leave once you’re back.”

Indeed, regardless of whether it was as an adventurer or student, Damien had always prioritized beast-slaying quests, and Zara never took any rewards. The bodies needed to be presented as proof of completion, so she didn’t have any time to gain strength.

After nodding at Damien gratefully and nuzzling up to him for a bit, Zara vanished into the woods.

Damien kept his sword in his hands and sat down on the ground cross-legged. ‘It’s not yet time for me to create the 4th step, but I have plenty of improvement to do for the first 3 steps.’

Every use of his sword art had been catered towards mass destruction. He had never considered other uses of the art. Even chaining from one step to another was an unexplored concept.

Hypothetically, if he could limit the effects of the 3rd step, spatial collapse, and use it to restrain the target in a locked space, it would immensely benefit the 1st and 2nd steps.

Likewise, if he used the 2nd step, dance of the void, and used the first step, bladeless, as a finisher, it could be a devastating attack.

His sword art wasn’t some structured masterpiece that exponentially increased in power when one move was chained to the next, rather it was more apt to call it a compilation of his achievements in the sword path.

This made it so each move had a great deal of individuality, and there was immense potential for multiple combinations and chains. Damien only needed to work out the details.

He had a feeling that once he completed this step and made this compilation into a true art, his sword mastery would finally evolve into something new.

He sat there like a statue for 3 days without moving a single muscle, but every once in a while, the space around him would contort and collapse, while at other times his sword would randomly vanish.

But throughout this process, only a small amount of damage was done to the surroundings.

At the end of those 3 days, Damien slowly stood up with his eyes still closed. He began moving slowly, but as time passed his speed picked up.

He looked like he was performing a one-man show as he danced with abandon alone in the forest.

His sword was kept in fluid motion as small areas of the land kept disappearing without a sound.

As his speed reached its climax, a change occurred. Every 5 moves of his dance, his sword would flicker and deep gashes were created in the lush ground.

However, unlike the massive chunks that were damaged when he usually used the 1st step, these gashes were strictly linear and concentrated. The damage was more pronounced in its depth than its width.

Damien kept his dance going for 4 weeks, every once in a while stopping when he ran out of mana and going back into contemplating the fusion he was attempting.

In the first and second week, his dance was accompanied by the gashes created by the first step, but on the third and fourth, those gashes stopped appearing altogether.

Instead, space would contort and thicken, causing the tree branches that were swaying in the wind created by his movements to abruptly pause for a second before they continued their movement.

By the end of the fourth week, each swing of his was accompanied by a constricting pressure that disallowed any escape from his blade.

Falling leaves were stopped in place and directly cut by his sword, and trees were split in half with their trunks being unable to fall over.

When Damien finally stopped moving, many of the trees in his vicinity fell in different directions as the spatial locks disappeared.

Damien's shirtless figure was covered head to toe in sweat. Although he had always trained himself intensively, this time he had gone without pause for over a month.

The only time he stopped was when he ran out of mana, but even then he was pushing his brain to contemplate the fusion he was performing.

But his efforts were rewarding. He hadn't been completely successful in learning how to fluidly switch between and combine the steps of his sword art, but he had made good progress.

Looking at the surrounding environment, Damien noticed that Zara wasn't back yet so he decided to once again work on refining his vector control, when all of a sudden, he heard the sound of clapping coming from behind him.

“That was a truly impressive showing, young man.”