

Void 46

Chapter 46

Since it was relatively close, it took less than a day for Damien to reach the mountain. It looked to be close to a full 10,000 meters in height, leaving Damien stunned by its magnificence.

It didn't have the same rumbling sky or cracked surface as Thunder Mountain did, rather this one was a true natural beauty. The entire mountainside was filled with lush trees and various beautiful flowers.

When he spread his awareness, Damien could sense many beasts cohabitating its surface as well. And unlike the scenes in the dungeon, these beasts didn't constantly feed on each other for growth. There were even a few species that seemed to be herbivorous, without the need or desire for meat.

It was a clear day, so Damien could see up to the peak of the mountain, which was capped in snow, giving off a beautiful contrast with the vibrant colors that led up to it.

Damien thought this environment gave off a feeling of bliss.

No endless fight on the path to strength, no burdens or worries, and no pressure. However, this type of life didn't appeal to him. He loved gaining strength, he loved pressure that stimulated his growth, and although he didn't love burdens, he knew they were inevitable if one had even a single person or thing they cared about.

In reality, everything besides oneself could be considered a burden on this long and arduous path, and it was normal for many people to forsake everything for the sake of strength. Some people even choose to be so cold-hearted that their own families become nothing more than pawns to fit their needs.

Damien knew he had the chance to take this path if he truly wanted to, but he didn't have any desire to become like this. He liked his human side, his sometimes volatile emotions, and the bonds he had with the select few people he was close with.

He agreed that others could become burdens for him, and he even understood that from a certain perspective, his own mother who was bedridden could be considered a burden, but he didn't care.

He had a taste of the endless cycle of blood that came from being alone, the feral and primal nature that one would begin to develop. He had no interest in that.

If he wanted to do that, then that day he would've forsaken his humanity and devoured Zara rather than saving her.

Shaking his head, Damien snapped out of his thoughts. Now wasn't the time for introspection.

He gazed up the mountain and thought to himself, 'if I'm being honest I could spam teleport and make it to the peak in a few seconds, but I doubt that's what that old man wants.'

It had only been 2 days and he was already tired of playing the old man's games, but he decided that he'd concede with this one last challenge. Without further ado, Damien began rushing up the mountain.

And indeed, just as Elder Blanc had suspected, there were countless traps set up along the way. Some were stupid traps that could only kill mortals, such as a swinging tree trunk, but some were even slightly dangerous to him.

There was a pit full of 3rd class vipers that he almost fell into, mechanisms that suppressed his spatial ability and forced him to narrowly dodge razor-sharp blades with his bare body, and many other traps.

‘This old man seriously has a wild imagination.’ Damien kept climbing without stopping as he evaded trap after trap. Surprisingly, no beasts attacked him besides those within the traps. It seemed that there was some sort of order among them.

Even the ones that looked desperate to eat him begrudgingly turned away as he continued his climb. And by the time night fell, Damien reached the snow-covered peak.

There, he saw a familiar middle-aged man staring into the distance with his back facing Damien as if to come off as more mysterious. Knowing that this was the old man’s quirk, he didn’t pay attention to it, instead opting to sit down and recover his mana.

When Damien closed his eyes, the man took a peek behind him and witnessed Damien completely ignoring him. He was disgruntled but didn’t bother the kid as he recovered his mana. Half an hour later, Damien’s eyes began to open, and the man returned to his original pose of gazing into the distance.

“Old man, there’s no need to act so mysteriously with me. That elder already told me about your antics.”

The man’s shoulders twitched a bit when he heard this, and he reluctantly turned around. “That damn witch! Looks like I need to teach her a lesson when I get back.”

Noticing Damien's deadpan gaze, the man quickly changed the subject. "Kuhum... I guess now is the time for formal introductions. My name is Malcolm Grey, and I am the Headmaster of Zenith Academy. And I want you, Damien Void, to be my student."

The air of an expert radiated from Malcolm as he revealed his status, waiting to see the shock on Damien's face.

However, Damien's gaze was still deadpan.

"Okay, now what?"

Malcolm's brows twitched. "Kid, don't you get it? The headmaster of the whole academy wants to take you as a student. Aren't you supposed to be like 'Wow! What an opportunity!' or something?"

Damien's dead fish gaze intensified. "Old man, I figured you were the headmaster after the reactions of everyone I showed the token to. It isn't that hard. Also, why would I be surprised about you wanting to train me? You literally made it so obvious with all the testing and mysteriousness. So, let's just get on with the actual training part."

The twitch in Malcolm's brow became even more pronounced. Not only was the kid being so blunt that it slightly damaged his ego, he even had the nerve to keep calling him 'old man' even though he's known his status since the beginning.

Sighing at the fact that he couldn't keep his cool image, Malcolm's eyes turned serious and his whole aura shifted.

“Very well, since you want to learn then let’s start immediately. Your sword art seems to be original and you’ve already found a path so I won’t say anything about it. The same goes for your spatial affinity. I can teach you about lightning but that’ll be secondary.”

Damien felt his pride swell hearing all the praise he was getting, but he was soon brought back to reality.

“The most important thing is your mana control. Frankly, it’s shit. Completely garbage for someone your age. Even little 5-year-old children can easily wield mana better than you without even trying. I saw during our first fight that you have immense reserves of mana, but you still ran out within only a couple of hours. Truly, you should be ashamed of yourself.”

Damien was too stunned to speak. Since he had begun his climb in strength, he had never received such a harsh rating of his abilities. He fought a 3rd class and succeeded in killing him, begetting praise. His level was insane for his age, begetting praise.

Not once had someone insulted or berated him since he had left earth. He was about to retort and get angry at the old man, but he stopped himself and thought about the words he had heard.

The more he thought, the more he realized the truth in those words. Damien had put all his focus on his sword art and his affinities. Not once had he ever focused on mana control.

He had always used mana however he pleased without any rhyme or reason to it.

In the first place, the structure of his mana control was based on how it had been utilized by the feral version of him when he had been taken over by his bestial instinct.

How could a feral beast with barely any conscious thought be able to compare to an intelligent being?

Beasts above 2nd class had already started developing intelligence, so even they probably had better mana control than him. His eyes hardened as he realized this.

‘Ahh, I truly got too conceited recently. If nobody had said anything, I probably wouldn’t have corrected it before it turned into a habit I can’t change.’

Malcolm had been watching Damien this whole time, seeing how he’d react to his harsh words. In fact, he had made sure to make his words more taunting specifically to test Damien’s reaction.

At first, he was disappointed seeing Damien get angry. But as he continued to watch Damien fall into thought and saw his eyes harden as he realized the truth, Malcolm became appreciative.

This kid was truly worthy to become his disciple.

Pride is normal and was bred within almost every lifeform as they gained strength. With all the hard work most people put into their strength, how could they not hold immense pride over their achievements?

The main issue was knowing when pride turned into arrogance and fixing the issue before it stabbed them in the back.

Seeing Damien look up at him, Malcolm smiled.

“Good. It seems you’ve realized the truth of the matter. Let me reintroduce myself then. My name is Malcolm Grey, a 4th class, and the only person in the human domain who has reached the Saint-level in mana control. Are you willing to accept me as your teacher?”

This time, Damien’s eyes truly did widen in shock. The quirky old man in front of him was actually a 4th class and someone who reached Saint-level to boot.

This level was seen as a legend by many people in the world, but someone who had reached it was standing before him.

His decision didn’t even take a second. Bowing his head, Damien repeated a line he’d read countless times in novels.

“Damien greets his new teacher.”

Malcolm’s smile grew even wider. “Good! Now, let’s start our training to make you unstoppable in the Nexus Event. The first and most important priority? Mana Circuits.”