

Void 461

Chapter 461 Break [5]

"Brat, how much do you know about the force called Niflheim?"

Hearing Tian Yang's sudden question, Damien's eyes widened. Niflheim, with everything that had happened in the past few years, he almost forgot about them. Hearing them brought up now was an immense surprise.

"Hmm, an organization that called itself Niflheim was attempting something with the World Core of my homeworld a few years ago. I remember they clashed with forces dispatched from this world, but I'm not sure if it's the same Niflheim you're talking about." Damien answered.

Tian Yang shook his head. "No, it is most likely the same force. In fact, Niflheim has been in conflict with our Cloud Plane for a few decades already. As for the reason, it is because they are the Nox's main subsidiary force in our sector of the universe."

Damien's eyes hardened. Although he didn't know much about Niflheim, he understood the significance of their position. Basically, Niflheim was a cornerstone of the Nox's plans.

But Damien decided to ask a different question first. For him to better understand the big picture, he couldn't be ignorant about information that others considered common knowledge. "Sectors? Can you explain more about them?"

"Well, it's not very difficult to understand. With how vast the universe is, it's only natural for it to be split into sectors. As for the total number of known sectors, there are nine.

"Each sector is home to hundreds or thousands of worlds. However, most of these are simple beginner worlds like the Earth that you have mentioned before. For a world to promote its level is not a simple task. Middle worlds like our Cloud Plane only number in the thousands even when considering the universe as a whole.

"The nine sectors were never given specified names, and even if they were, there is too little contact between sectors for it to matter. For convenience, we tend to call the sectors simply by the numbers 1-9 based on their ranking.

"Each sector has a different ruling race that is more prominent than other races in the same area. As for us, we are Sector 3, the Human Domain."

Damien furrowed his brow. The information Tian Yang gave was indeed simple, but it once again drilled into Damien's mind the true vastness of the universe.

"Apart from the 9 sectors you mentioned, what about the rest of the universe? There must be a reason why you specified that they are the nine "known" sectors."

Tian Yang smiled. "The universe is infinitely expanding. How can we mere creations dare claim we know the true depths of it? Even Demigods might not be able to comprehend that much. The universe outside of the 9 Sectors is often called the void, the abyss, or many other names along the same lines.

"It's a dangerous place where time doesn't flow linearly like we are used to, where dead zones filled with destroyed stars and rampant energy are common. The reason why the 9 Sectors are considered the "known" universe is because these 9 Sectors are the only places where true "order" exists.

"The time flow within the 9 Sectors is consistent, and they are widely inhabitable by living beings. The vast starry sky beyond the sectors is a place where not many dare to traverse."

Damien's eyes were slowly filled with hunger as he continued listening to Tian Yang's information. His love of adventure was sparked aflame once more.

But he quelled his excitement soon enough. As he thought more about what Tian Yang said, he became a little worried.

"How about the Nox? Hasn't their Main World gone undiscovered even to this day? Doesn't that mean it exists within the Abyss? And doesn't that mean the Nox can traverse the Abyss safely? If so, haven't they conquered far more of the universe than we're aware of?"

Tian Yang accepted Damien's barrage of questions without complaint. After all, it was completely normal for him to question these things that all before him had questioned as well.

Tian Yang let out a tired sigh. "Are you beginning to understand the true danger that the Nox bring? Of course, many have had the same thoughts as you, but that wasn't able to change anything. No matter how much we desire to confirm our suspicions or delve into the Abyss, we are still unable to do so, whether through artifacts or human resources."

Damien pursed his lips. He was most definitely underestimating the danger of the Abyss since he had never personally witnessed it. But that didn't change his thought process at all.

'I want to go there. No, I need to go there.'

The Abyss was a sea of horrors for others, this much he understood. But, as a Star Master, as a Celestial, wasn't the starry sky his territory? Would something like chaotic space really be able to stop him?

Smack!

A sudden smack to his head cleared Damien's mind.

"Idiot disciple, don't think I'm unaware of your thoughts. Even I can traverse the chaotic space without worry, but that doesn't mean I am able to safely traverse the Abyss. The scariest part of the Abyss isn't the chaotic space, or even the terrifying cosmic beasts that reside within. The scariest part has to be time.

"Time within the Abyss isn't constant. In some places, it could flow extremely fast, while sometimes it crawls to a snail's pace. Dead Zones are places where all essence, including mana itself, are void. In those spaces, time doesn't flow at all. A single day's journey could suddenly last for a million years. And once you enter that terrifying cycle, it is almost impossible to remove yourself.

"The reason why the Abyss is unexplored even with the large number of powerful practitioners in the 9 Sectors is because nobody has been able to escape this vortex of time with their sanity intact. It's the same even for those who specialize in Time Laws. No, it might be even worse for them."

Damien fell into thought once more. Indeed, the gnawing loneliness and silence of the vacuum weren't things that ordinary people could endure. When the timespan was increased to years numbering in the thousands, even 4th class existences would fold.

But even knowing this, Damien's resolve to one day visit that place didn't waver. There were multiple reasons for this.

For one, the Nox. Their Main World was most likely deep in the Abyss. Therefore, to root out the threat, going there was necessary.

Secondly, his class as a Celestial. The whole universe was his to conquer. Perhaps it was an arrogant way to think, but Damien was sure that this was his path as a Celestial. If he couldn't even be this arrogant, he had no right to pursue such a wild dream.

And lastly, it was to satisfy his curiosity. He felt a strange pull to the Abyss, something like a calling. He couldn't pinpoint exactly where this feeling came from, since it was different from the intuition that allowed him to meet Zara, but he wanted to pursue it and find out.

Regardless of the reason, going to the Abyss became one of Damien's top priorities.

But the war still came first.

"Alright, since I've gotten a better grasp on the scale of things, let's get back to the main point. Tell me more about Niflheim."

Chapter 462 Break [6]

Tian Yang nodded and continued his previous topic.

"As you've mentioned, the Nox's Main World is not located within our 9 Sectors. We've been searching for the past 10,000 years and more, ever since the last war, but we haven't found a single trace.

"What we have found, however, are the 9 subsidiary forces that carry out the Nox's will within our universe. Within our sector, this is Niflheim.

"If it was simply a matter of traitors alone, there wouldn't be any problem with eradicating these forces outright. The problem is, each subsidiary is overseen by a Nox Demigod. Tens or hundreds of 4th class Nox are also present under that Demigod as supervisors. Only after these true-blooded Nox can we mention the countless traitors that serve them.

"Our goal this time is to finally eradicate Niflheim to its roots, securing our sector's safety during the coming war."

Silence enveloped the courtyard as Tian Yang's overview finished. The two sect masters quietly sipped their tea as they waited for Damien to process the information he was given.

'Eradicate? If it was so easy, wouldn't it have been done already? Not to mention, there's a genuine Demigod at the head of that organization. I don't know if the old man and the others are unaware or overconfident, but the power of a Demigod definitely isn't something a 4th class can match with just numbers.'

Damien rubbed his temples. If there wasn't a Demigod involved, he wouldn't doubt the chances of this plan's success.

But he had personally witnessed it in the 3000 Beast Mountain Range. The presence of a Demigod changed everything.

He immediately voiced his concerns. Tian Yang said that he would be included in this operation, but if there were no contingencies made against that Demigod, Damien had no plans of joining them in their suicide mission.

Tian Yang smiled wryly. "Calling it a suicide mission is a bit...well, it's just like you to say that. However, you are worrying needlessly. Did you really think that I, your master, was such a conceited person? Naturally, I'm aware, the only way to combat a Demigod is with another Demigod."

Damien's eyes widened. "You're saying..."

"Correct! Our Ancestor of the Jade Heavenly Palace is participating in this mission. There is no need to be worried about a puny Nox Demigod." Shangguan Yu butted in.

"The Jade Heavenly Palace...has a Demigod Ancestor?!" Damien exclaimed in shock.

Shangguan Yu shrugged as if this was a completely normal thing. "Of course we do. As a matter of fact, doesn't your Celestial Star Palace also have one? Even the Supreme Fairy Paradise and Divine Dragon Temple have a Demigod Ancestor. Why else do you think we are able to maintain our positions as the 5 Great Sects?"

Damien's mind went blank. It was truly a Shangguan Yu-like thing to do, dropping this kind of important information casually.

'To think the Cloud Plane was a place with so many Demigods...if the 5 Great Sects truly went to war with each other, the planet would be razed. No wonder the relationships between them are oddly harmonious.'

It wasn't that there weren't power-hungry people among them, it was just that the threat of a Demigod wasn't something that could be overcome.

Damien was still a bit worried after hearing that the Jade Heavenly Palace's Ancestor would be joining them, but hearing that there were other Demigods present to guard the world, Damien's worry dissipated.

'Even if that Ancestor dies, the Cloud Plane itself will still be protected. Wait...I can just ask Yun for minor details like this. Why did I never think to do that?'

Damien sunk into his spiritual world as Shangguan Yu began bragging about the Jade Heavenly Palace Ancestor. Using the time he gained while the latter spoke about useless things, Damien connected his consciousness with Yun's.

[Greetings, Master.]

'Yeah, what's up. Anyway, there's no time for formalities. Quickly tell me about the Demigods living in the Cloud Plane.'

[Affirmative. Commencing search. Search completed. There are currently 5 Demigods residing in the world.]

'5?!' Damien gasped. According to what Shangguan Yu said earlier, the Red Lotus Sect's Ancestor already perished in the last war. Considering this, there should only be 4 Demigods in the Cloud Plane.

[Affirmative. You are already in possession of information about 4 of the aforementioned beings. Transmitting the location of the fifth.]

A stream of information flowed into Damien's spiritual world. He closed his eyes and concentrated on it.

His vision expanded suddenly. He found himself floating in the sky above the Central Continent.

'This is...!'

His eyes widened into saucers at what he saw. Hidden in the never-ending cloud layer above the continent, there was a medium-sized floating island.

His vision zoomed in on that island. But, unexpectedly, there was nothing of note to see.

It was just a normal island. Lush green grasses and flower beds strewn about, a small forest to one side, and a lake in the middle. The only real special factor of the island was the fact that it was airborne.

'Hm?'

Damien's attention was suddenly pulled to the lake. Reflecting off its surface, he saw the outline of something man-made. His vision zoomed again, arriving at the lake.

'I wasn't hallucinating. What is a cabin doing on this floating island?'

The strangeness of the situation seemed to have impacted Damien, as he all but forgot the reason why his consciousness was pulled to this island.

As he stared at the cabin, he tried to will his consciousness forward to enter it, but he found himself blocked.

'Someone who can interfere with my power as the Star Master?'

Splash!

The sound of water splashing resounded from the lake behind Damien, giving him a light scare. And following his natural human instinct, he turned around...

And almost immediately got a nosebleed.

There, in the water, was a woman whose midnight black hair flowed down her snow-white back, creating a sparking contrast that immediately drew Damien's eyes.

He traced her figure upward, especially focusing on the outline of her curves that reflected off the water. Unfortunately, the woman had her back to him, so he wasn't able to see anything more than that outline.

But it was enough to leave a deep impression in his mind.

"Hmph!"

A sudden snort rang out from behind him. Damien felt a fierce impact on the back of his head.

"Brat, have you seen enough?"

The voice was that of a woman, and a young one at that. Hearing it, Damien turned once again.

"You...you can see me?" He questioned in surprise.

"Of course I can. You actually dared to come to my island without knowing who I am?" The woman responded coldly.

Damien abruptly remembered his original purpose for coming here. "So it's you! The mysterious fifth Demigod!"

The woman snorted. "Yeah, and it's you, the newly crowned Star Master. I was planning on coming down to the secular world to see what kind of person you are for myself, but it turns out that you're just another pervert."

Damien hastily waved his hands. "Senior, don't be mistaken. I came here because I was curious about you, a Demigod who even Shangguan Yu is clueless about. You can't blame me for being distracted. It was basic human instinct to turn around when I heard a sound."

As he spoke, he tried to quietly withdraw his consciousness and flee the island. The first impression he left on this unknown Demigod was too shabby, so it was better to try to make contact again later.

But the woman rolled her eyes and waved her hand. Immediately, Damien was pulled back, unable to leave the island. And as if nothing happened, she continued on her previous words.

"Oh? So it was just basic human instinct? Are you telling me that you weren't taken with my cute disciple just now? I can practically see the drool dripping from your mouth."

"Hey, hey, hey! I'm a married man, you know? Granted, I'm married to many, but I'm still a loyal person! How can I fall in love with just any girl I see?"

"So you really did fall in love with her! Ha, stupid brat! Don't try to fool me!"

Damien didn't know whether to laugh or cry. Didn't he just say the complete opposite of that? Why did this Demigod have such an eccentric personality?

"Hm? You're thinking something nasty, aren't you? Very well, I shall reveal your presence to my cute disciple and let her decide how to deal with you."

"Hold on, don't be hasty, we can talk this out. Anyway, peeping on your disciple was a complete accident. It's your fault for not letting me enter the cabin."

"So you're saying that I wanted you to peep on my disciple? You're saying that since my disciple has been living here in seclusion her whole life, it would be good for her to meet new people and grow more? You're saying you'll take responsibility for her?"

Now, Damien truly wanted to cry. "Aren't you the one saying those things, though? Come on, I'm in the middle of an important meeting, please let me go!"

The woman raised her brow contemptuously. "Hmph. It seems that I, an Exalted Demigod, am worth less than a few bugs. I guess leaving my disciple to you would be a mistake."

'Good!' Damien exclaimed inwardly. Even if the woman in the lake had an extraordinary figure, he didn't want to have to deal with yet another woman when he hadn't consolidated his current relationships yet.

"Senior, how about this? When I finish my business, I will come here with my main body and we can speak in depth about many things. Until then, allow me to return."

The woman narrowed her eyes. "And how can I be so certain you'll come back? Mortals are untrustworthy after all. Besides, who said I wanted you to come back at all? Don't decide on your own!"

Damien almost screamed in frustration. He really couldn't deal with this woman at all. She just implied that she wanted him to return, but in the next sentence contradicted herself so naturally. No matter how he answered, he'd lose.

'I'm just going to leave. Let's put off recruiting this Demigod until I'm mentally sane enough to cope.'

Damien retracted his consciousness from his spiritual world, and his vision of the sky island vanished at the same time.

He sighed in relief. 'Good thing she didn't pill be back this time. Haa...why are all the old people I meet so eccentric?!'

Damien shook his head wryly. 'Well, that took up more time than I wished for it to. Let's get back onto the topic of Niflheim.'

Chapter 463 Conversations [1]

'Haa...what an exhausting day.' Damien sighed to himself as he left the courtyard where the three experts were staying at the moment.

After his run-in with the '5th Demigod' whom he still didn't know the name of, he returned to his body and conversed with them a bit longer about their plans for Niflheim. Unfortunately, there wasn't much they could tell him.

As they said before, the overarching goal was to destroy Niflheim to the point where it could never resurge. As for information, they didn't know much besides the strength of the true-blooded Nox in the organization.

But there were a few interesting points Damien learned from them.

For one, Niflheim was not the name of a world, but only an organization. This went against what he originally thought of them, but after understanding their purpose in residing in Sector 3, it was easier to rationalize.

Secondly, Niflheim hadn't managed to completely take control of the world they resided in quite yet. This was the reason why the forces of the Cloud Plane still had a chance to take them down.

There was a resistance in that unnamed world that, whether by coincidence or not, took up the name Asgard and opposed the Nox's reign.

As for how they were able to rebel at all against the strength of the Nox, the reasoning was simple. So simple that Damien almost wanted to facepalm when he heard it.

It was a simple matter of arrogance.

The Nox were beings that looked down on all other races as inferior. The attitude of 'law of the jungle' was far more prevalent in their race than any other. In the same vein, the resistance forces of a few humans didn't catch the eye of those Nox.

Instead, they just made their vassals do the work for them and fight. As such, the fight in that unnamed world had become one of human against human.

Luckily, this allowed the resistance to survive and build strength. Under the noses of those arrogant Nox, Asgard had become extremely powerful, possessing numerous 4th-class existences and even more 3rd-class and below.

'They are our key to infiltrating that world, and they are the key to fighting against Niflheim. Without them, things will get much more troublesome.'

Unfortunately, communication between worlds wasn't yet something that could be done on a regular basis. This was also why Asgard wasn't able to provide sufficient information to the Cloud Plane forces yet. The 6 months gained due to the extermination plan would actually be majorly beneficial in the Niflheim plan as well.

'Well, that's that. Sadly, they won't tell me any of the crucial details until it's time for us to embark on the mission. I guess information control is this strict because of the nature of the mission. It can't be helped.'

Even though Damien was heavily confident in the fact that nobody under the Demigod level would be able to pry information out of him forcefully due to his Void Physique, that wasn't something he could just tell people. Therefore, he accepted their secrecy without much of a fuss.

'Starting next week is the purge. I'll have to go along with them too, so that I can identify Devil Worshipers for them. But, that's not a bad thing at all. Even though it's been so long, there isn't a chance in hell that I would forget...'

The Eclipsing Shadow Sect that humiliated him and Ruyue in the past, forcing them to flee into the 3000 Beast Mountain Range...as a force that was competing for the Death Seed back then, it was natural that they found their way onto the kill list.

Damien clenched his fists, a ferocious grin spreading across his face. 'Just you wait, you shadow bastards. I'll slaughter you all.'

His killing intent flared with so much force that it caved in the ground below him. Seeing the damage he unconsciously caused, Damien quickly recalled his aura.

'Phew, since I have Yun's help, there's nobody in the Cloud Plane that can hide from me. What a convenient assistant he is.'

Damien was feeling conflicted about arbitrarily giving the World Core a gender, but since it made it more convenient for him when referring to it, he just went with it.

Instead of focusing on nonsensical things like that, he turned his attention elsewhere.

'Although I need to participate in the purge, it shouldn't take up all my time. Soon, I'll warp back to Apeiron and bind the World Core over there as well. Then, I need to simultaneously purge both worlds.'

Earth was still there as well, but Damien didn't know if a full-scale purge was necessary there. Last time he visited, he already exterminated the Nox's forces and the Worshippers they created. However...

'You can never be too careful. Those Nox bastards proliferate too fast for me to get complacent. To stay on the safe side, I should purge earth as well.'

Damien rubbed his temples. He seemed to have developed a habit of doing so recently. It couldn't be helped, though, since his plate kept getting filled with more and more tasks ever since he left the 3000 Beast Mountain Range.

'Tch. Forget it. For now, I'll drop everything else. Let me go meet the two women I feel most apologetic to in this world.'

Damien's figure flashed away. As for his destination? It was the residence of a certain pink-haired beauty who he still held unreconciled longing for.

Where there were seas, there was land. Where there were mountains, there were valleys, and where there was light, there was darkness.

If the 3000 Beast Mountain Range was the "mountain" of the Central Continent's 5 Forbidden Zones, the Shadowless Forest was the valley.

It was a land of darkness where no living being could reside peacefully. It was a place filled with the stench of death and insanity. Even the beasts that resided in this place could hardly be called living.

Instead, they were commonly of the undead and spirit variety, races with low sentience who didn't need the light to survive.

Deep within the Shadowless Forest, there was an unassuming cave mansion. However, if one entered inside, they would hardly be able to call it unassuming.

A vast throne room, many auxiliary areas, and more, it was the typical setup that a medium-sized sect would have.

But even though the number of personnel made them seem like a medium-sized sect, their average strength didn't lose out to many high-ranking clans and sects.

Within the throne room of this cave mansion, a man sat placidly on the throne. His eyes were closed as if there was a difference between having them open or closed within the Shadowless Forest.

Whoosh!

"Reporting to the Lord."

A shadow conglomerated on the floor in front of him, forming into the figure of a man prostrating himself.

"First Shadow? It is rare for you to report something yourself. Speak."

First Shadow bowed his head deeper. "Yes, my Lord. Although it is not confirmed, it looks like the man who stole the Death Seed has returned from the 3000 Beast Mountain Range alive:"

The "Lord" opened his eyes and looked down at First Shadow. Even though he didn't speak, the formless pressure coming from his presence was enough to cause a cold sweat to run down First Shadow's back.

Seeing that the "Lord" didn't speak, First Shadow hurriedly continued. "A man and woman pair made their debut at the Empyrean Dragon Realm opening one week ago. Based on their descriptions, they are the ones we chased into the mountain range after the auction."

The Eclipsing Shadow Sect Master indifferently gazed at First Shadow. "Why are you telling me this?"

"M-my apologies, Lord. 5th through 12th Shadow have already been dispatched to confirm the information and assassinate the target. I merely felt that moving without the Lord's acknowledgment was unacceptable, so I have come to report."

"Mm..." The Eclipsing Shadow Sect Master made a sound of acknowledgment. Hearing it, First Shadow's figure melted away from the room, leaving the Sect Master alone with his thoughts once more.

'The Death Seed...a brat who managed to escape my clutches. Maybe I should personally deal with him.'

"First Shadow." The Sect Master called out, suddenly remembering something.

As First Shadow's figure reappeared, the Sect Master posed his question. "How?"

First Shadow furrowed his brows in confusion, but soon understood his Lord's question. How did they manage to escape the 3000 Beast Mountain Range that nobody has ever escaped before?

The sweat trailing down First Shadow's back intensified. As he thought of the outrageous scene he witnessed while gathering information, he felt intuitively that it would've been better to not pry at all.

But his Lord's words were absolute, so he couldn't stop himself from answering.

"T-the 3000 Beast Mountain Range no longer exists. The entire area has...been razed to the ground."

Chapter 464 Conversations [2]

'Haa...I've been sighing too much lately.'

Damien closed his eyes and relished in the warmth he was currently feeling. With his body sprawled out on the soft bed with Rose pressed closely against him, this kind of nostalgic feeling really calmed his mind.

Although he came here to have a serious conversation with her, he didn't end up doing so immediately. His mind was too clouded with other thoughts for him to properly convey what he wanted to convey.

It was his fate as someone heavily invested in the coming war. Even though it didn't seem like it, every day since he left the 3000 Beast Mountain Range was part of the gradual countdown to war.

He realized it after everything he went through in the Primordial Undying Realm. The rest and relaxation he could experience now might be the last for a very long time.

So, he closed his eyes. He desperately wanted to drift off to sleep and clear his fatigue, but he wouldn't allow himself to do so. At least, not until he finished what he came here to do.

With his eyes still closed, he sunk his consciousness into his spiritual world. As he did so, he replayed the memories he built with Rose over the short few years they had known each other.

'She took a sidekick role for me because of my inability. By all rights, Rose is a genius who should be the main character of her own story, not someone who just sits idly by and supports me.'

It was her unwavering attitude that made him unsure about how to proceed. Because even if she was mad at him, she would still unconditionally support him.

It was a great trait to have, and Damien truly appreciated that side of her, but it also made it harder for him to come out and problem-solve with her.

'Fuck that. Am I going to give in to my fear and return to being who I was before? There's no way in hell I'll be so pathetic ever again.'

Damien steeled his heart. He still didn't know what he was going to say, but he would start talking anyway. If he couldn't even manage to start the conversation, why would it matter if he didn't know what to say?

"Rose..." His voice was quiet. Perhaps it was because of his fatigue or perhaps it was his indecision leaking through, he sounded especially powerless at the moment.

But Rose didn't point it out. She stayed silent and waited for him to continue speaking.

And so he did.

"Back when you met me, I was at arguably the worst point in my life, at least mentally. Somehow, you managed to befriend that mentally unstable me and bring a dose of humanity into my life. I've always been thankful for that. Because back then, I didn't need anything like love or affection. No, even if I received those, I probably would've shunned them immediately.

"What I needed was humanity. Your normal lively and playful self that ignored my personal boundaries and forced your way into my life—ow, don't pinch me while I'm being sentimental...anyway, the you from back then was the perfect flavor I needed to become a "human" again.

"The problem was that along with my humanity, the scars in my heart returned as well. Those were scars that I didn't have the emotional capacity to deal with. Even that day when I told you my worries upfront, I still wasn't ready to deal with them.

"In fact, if you had decided to give me advice back then, I probably would've ignored it. Luckily for me, you were quite understanding. You even told me your own story to comfort me.

"When I think back to how I left you and Elena when we first stepped on the Central Continent, it makes me want to die. We were both heading toward the same area, so why did I need to leave you so early? What would've happened if you were injured or worse after we separated in this unknown land? Those kinds of thoughts didn't flash through my head at all.

"I was just selfishly thinking about running away and being alone again so I could be comfortable. It was the worst thing I could've possibly done to you, who showed unconditional love and support to a bastard like me."

Damien paused to organize his thoughts. His words were flowing like a river, he didn't even know what he was saying. He just talked for the sake of talking.

"Saying I'm not good with relationships is an understatement. This kind of sincerely apologizing and laying my feelings bare isn't something I can do properly, so I hope you can forgive me if I sound stupid and talk pointlessly right now.

"To be honest, I've been feeling guilty ever since I entered the Celestial Star Palace and had a chance to think about what I'd done. Perhaps this apology is also a selfish attempt at assuaging that guilt. Regardless of the reason, it's true that I've been waiting for the day of our reunion for years.

"But, just like you'd expect from me, I even fucked that up."

Damien sighed. He began to tell Rose about what he experienced in the Primordial Undying Realm. Specifically, the Trial of Self.

"Ever since I realized why I had been neglecting Elena like I was, the guilt I felt toward her took over my emotions. It was like a wave of guilt that was previously hidden in my subconscious came flooding out. But, that isn't an excuse.

"I don't really know how things turned out the way they did. From the start, I was practicing abstinence for your sake. It was something I stuck to with conviction. As for how my conviction crumbled so easily? Even I don't know."

Damien shook his head. The more he continued talking, the more he found himself trying to make excuses to justify his actions. It was an ugly habit that he didn't want to appear during this conversation.

So he stopped talking superfluously. There was really only one thing he was trying to say.

"I'm sorry. I'm sorry for breaking your trust in me, I'm sorry for making you feel abandoned, I'm sorry for making you feel like I don't trust you... there are probably a million other things I need to apologize for, but I don't have the mental capacity to list them all out. So, all I can really say is that I'm sorry..."

Damien couldn't help but cringe. It was really a shitty apology. But he did what he could. Even if the words themselves were dogshit, he poured his emotions into them in hopes that they would be properly conveyed.

Damien sat in silence. Rose did the same, not moving from her position once during his monologue. And Damien didn't dare spread his awareness to see what kind of expression she was making right now.

He was terrified of seeing indifference on her face.

But as if to mock his fear, a hot and wet feeling dripped onto his torso. Unfortunately, it took him a while to understand what that feeling was.

Tears.

He didn't know whether they were happy tears or sad tears, but it was a fact that Rose was crying. Damien looked down at her hesitantly. And slowly, she lifted her head to meet his gaze.

The silence in the room felt especially glaring when their gazes met. The only solace they could find was in the heat of their bodies pressed against each other.

And as Damien waited anxiously, Rose opened her mouth and spoke for the first time.

Chapter 465 Conversations [3]

Truth be told, from the moment Damien came to visit her, Rose was elated. It'd been so long since the two of them were able to spend quality time together.

But when he started talking, her joyful feeling slowly faded. She already knew he was coming to have a serious talk with her, she just didn't know that it would come so suddenly.

And as he continued talking, Rose was slowly forced to remember the feelings she was trying to bury.

Was she angry? Yes. Did she know why she was angry? Very clearly.

The problem was, a great deal of her anger cleared up the second Damien brought himself to apologize. Because knowing him, doing so and laying his feelings bare was probably one of the greatest challenges he could face.

His decision to break that barrier for her was extremely endearing.

But at the same time, she couldn't just accept his apology as it was.

It was strange. Rose didn't really know how to feel at all. There were two sides of her furiously struggling within.

On one side was her "understanding" and "unconditionally supportive" personality. The part of her that wanted her to accept his apology immediately and embrace him.

This side of her wasn't driven as much by emotions. Rather, it was a side she developed after Damien told her about Elena.

She had a thought. She was the first wife, so she should uphold the dignity of the first wife position. From then on, she began doing many things for Damien's sake, prioritizing his well-being over her own feelings.

The "understanding first wife" within her wanted to drop this whole matter and return to being lovey-dovey, but Rose understood that doing so would just be avoiding the problem. Letting her inner heart seethe in turmoil without being addressed wouldn't bring even a single good result.

And then, there was the other side of her. At the end of the day, Rose was still a woman. The first wife persona that she tried to enforce upon herself couldn't suppress the feelings she felt due to Damien's negligence.

The resentment and sorrow in her heart refused to be quelled with something so simple as a verbal apology. Even when knowing that hearing this kind of apology from someone like Damien was a rare thing in and of itself.

Damien was right. She really did feel abandoned when he left her alone on the Central Continent. And even though Elena was there to accompany her, there was a large rift between them back then due to their shared feelings for Damien.

That rift, of course, closed with time, bringing her closer to Elena than she was to her own sisters. But that didn't change the fact that she felt abandoned and lonely constantly.

Forcing herself to cultivate nonstop, take missions whenever she could, and overall keep so busy that she couldn't think about anything else was the only way she could get rid of her negative emotions at the beginning.

It hurt. And because it hurt so much, she felt even more unresigned at the fact that it took Damien so much effort to squeeze out a simple apology.

But she could feel the feelings behind that apology, feelings far deeper than his words conveyed. Perhaps it was a benefit of mana, or perhaps it was due to her special eyes. Regardless of the reason, she could clearly feel it.

The worst part of it all was that neither side of her was necessarily correct. She just couldn't find the middle ground where she could settle herself.

And so, she was incredibly conflicted on how to act and what to say.

Without her realizing it, tears began to trickle down her face. When she raised her head and looked into that strange pair of pupils, her mouth opened on its own.

"I can't forgive you so easily."

She couldn't come to a decision, so she decided not to bother about it. Just like Damien had done, she chose to speak whatever came to her mind, while hoping to convey her earnest emotions as she spoke.

"I-I don't quite understand how I'm feeling at all, and I don't know how to respond to your apology. On one hand, I don't think there's anything for you to apologize for, and on the other, I feel like a simple apology doesn't mean anything in this situation.

"It's not like my feelings for you have changed. Perhaps it's because of how deeply my feelings have rooted themselves in my heart that I feel so conflicted about what to do now. Because I love you, I can support you unconditionally, but because I love you, I cannot forgive you."

It wasn't just about what happened back then. As Damien said before, he ruined their reunion by going and sleeping with Elena behind her back.

Rose felt a feeling she didn't think she would ever feel. It was the feeling that she created her "first wife" persona to avoid.

Jealousy.

Ugly and deceitful jealousy that tried to take control of her heart. Even she didn't realize how possessive she was until this incident.

"We are both too new to being in relationships, and we both have scars related to trusting people and putting our feelings on the table. With this kind of setup, it's only natural that a problem like this would arise at some point.

"Right now, I can't decide which opinion of mine is right. I think the best thing for us to do is just continue like we usually are. Maybe through spending time together, I can slowly forgive you and settle my internal struggle."

Rose sat up and looked down at Damien. "Still, even though the emotional problems can be settled over time, not everything is the same."

Rose shifted her position, turning her body and mounting Damien like a horse. Looking down at him from above, Rose flashed a sly grin.

"Elena is my precious little sister. I can't lose to her like this now, can I?"

Damien's eyes widened. Only when he felt Rose's hands snaking across his abs and lifting his shirt did he realize what was happening.

'Wasn't this supposed to be an emotional moment?!' He fretted inwardly. Although he did want to do it with Rose soon, he didn't think now was the opportune time.

"H-hey, calm down now. What ever happened to romance? You know, setting the mood and everything."

Rose raised her brow. "What mood? I didn't think that of the two of us, you'd be the one clamoring about romance."

Damien cringed. "Ugh, come on. I'm serious about this. I don't think we're in the right atmosphere to do something like this."

Rose rolled her eyes. No matter how domineering he was on the battlefield, as expected, her man was still so indecisive about the important things.

Seeing his hesitation, she shrugged and got off of his stomach. "Fine then."

But just as Damien was about to sigh in relief, Rose stood up in front of him and started slowly undoing her top.

Her arm moved gracefully across her body, reaching the opposite shoulder and sliding down the cloth covering it.

Rose smiled sensually. "If it's the mood that's the problem, then I just need to create the right mood, right?"

Chapter 466 Conversations [4]

"Goddamn..." Damien sighed in praise as he watched the scene in front of him.

Rose's robe slowly dropped from her shoulder, latching at her elbow and exposing a large portion of skin, including a peak at the wondrous cleavage hidden within.

And as if to accompany the gorgeous view that she was slowly revealing, the look in Rose's eyes completely changed.

From the normal playful Rose that he always knew to a fox hunting her prey, her expression practically devoured Damien whole.

But this was just the start of her tease.

The other side of her robe dropped, her top only being held from falling completely by her arms crossed in front of her chest. But just as her spring scenery was going to be revealed, she turned around, hiding the view.

"Tch." Damien clicked his tongue inadvertently, causing Rose to giggle.

"Bad man, what happened to acting as if you didn't want anything?" She teased lightly.

Her arms dropped to her sides, letting her robe drop with them. She then moved on to the next step, sensually playing with the clip of her bra as if struggling to get it undone.

Click!

And by the time that fated clicking sound rang out, Damien was practically drooling. If her goal was to make him impatient to ravage her, she had completed it to perfection.

Truthfully, it was completely and utterly wrong to say that Damien didn't want to do it. His and Rose's physical intimacy levels had always been high, and he had felt her assets rubbing against him over his clothes so many times.

It was to the point where he could practically envision the shape of her body if he tried hard enough.

But imagining it and seeing it in person were two different scenes. Even though he knew her body so well, he had never truly seen it, which added another layer of burning desire to the lust he was already feeling.

As things stood, Damien was ready to pounce. The only thing stopping him was his desire to see more of the show that was being put on for him.

Seeing the expression on his face, Rose's smile deepened. With her back facing him and her arm covering her breasts, she slowly undid the rest of her robe, letting it fall to the floor.

The view of her pliant cheeks covered by panties assaulted Damien's eyes. But before he could even recover from that stimulation, Rose turned around.

"Hissss..." Damien drew in a cold breath to calm himself down. Then, he took an extra second to admire her breasts.

Size-wise, they were similar to Elena's. But their shape was totally different. If he had to say, Rose's were much perkier.

Rose slowly walked to the bed where Damien sat. Her grip on her breasts loosened, allowing Damien to see the slight jiggle they produced with her steps.

Suddenly, formless mana covered her body and she vanished.

'This...' Damien's eyes widened in curiosity. He, naturally, could choose to see through her illusion if he felt like it, but why would he want to do so? It was obvious that Rose was planning something fun.

As he contemplated, he suddenly felt a sensation on his back, as if two soft mounds were firmly pressed against him. At the same time, invisible hands started to snake across his body, feeling every nook and cranny he had to offer.

'What a strange feeling...'

He knew Rose was there, but he couldn't see her. He could feel her touch, but he didn't know if she was actually touching him or just using illusions.

After all, there were far too many hands on his body at the moment for all of them to come from Rose.

This feeling of being blindfolded even though his vision was clear was oddly exciting. The desire to catch the real Rose and pin her down grew at a rapid pace.

Damien closed his eyes and enjoyed her treatment, especially focusing on the pair of hands that snuck into his pants and took hold of his member.

"I didn't expect you to be so proactive." He said with a smile.

"What can I do? My husband is so passive, I have no choice." A response came from the void.

Damien grinned. "Passive? Are you sure that's the right way to describe it?"

"What else could it be? How could you force an innocent woman like me to make the first move?"

"I see how it is. Very well, if you wish for me to be active, I'll show you what it means to be active."

Damien released a few strings of mana and had them circle his body, amplifying the feeling of touch he got from the hands that were feeling him up.

Within seconds, he reached out and grabbed the air. Unexpectedly, though, his hand didn't clench completely as if something was caught in his grasp.

"Found you." He grinned slyly. He immediately flipped his body, grabbing the other hand in the pair and switching their position. In that instant, he activated his All-Seeing Eyes.

"Keuk...! If you make that kind of expression right now, I'll really die." He said through heavy breaths as he looked down at Rose's face.

The heavy blush on her cheeks that matched the color of her hair, the way her eyes kept darting around without knowing where to look, it was so cute he could die.

"So this is your true face. I guess the vixen thing from before was just an act, hm? Well, not that I mind. I like this expression a lot more."

"D-don't tease me...using your eyes is cheating!" Rose muttered shyly. She desperately wanted to cover her face with her hands so he couldn't see her, but since they were pinned by Damien, she couldn't do so.

Damien grinned at her words. "Cheating? Why shouldn't I be able to see the beautiful figure of my wife when she's standing right in front of me?"

Damien lowered his head, stopping mere inches in front of Rose's breasts. Now that her hands were out of the way, he could finally see them clearly.

"Now that I think about it, I haven't eaten in a couple of years. If you place such delectable cherries like these in front of me, how do you expect me to resist?"

He took the final plunge, burying his face in her breasts. As he played with her breasts, he let go of her hands and began running his hands along her body.

Rose wanted to die from embarrassment as he did so. If it wasn't for the immense pleasure she felt as he played with her, and the joy she felt from finally being able to fulfill this dream of hers, she would've run away because of the sheer shame she felt.

But at the same time, it wasn't shameful at all. The more he touched her, the more she desired his touch.

And as his hand crawled into her sacred cave...

"I can't...take this...anymore," Rose muttered through ragged breaths. "You're moving...too slow!"

Her body turned into mist and reappeared above Damien, flipping him around and pushing him down onto the bed.

"Haa...haa...from now on...we go fast."

Without a hint of hesitation, Rose dropped her head and planted a furious kiss on Damien's lips. At the same time, her hand reached down into his pants and her panties vanished from her body without a trace.

It was at that moment that Damien knew...

He was in for a much wilder ride than he was expecting.

Chapter 467 Conversations [5]

Dawn arrived to usher in a new day, but the sunlight was unable to find its way through the dense cloud layer and shine upon the earth below.

Unexpectedly, it was raining heavily in the area around the Celestial Star Palace. Although the sect was covered in a protective formation that could easily block the rain, it wasn't used for such a purpose.

After all, rain wasn't a bad thing. Considering how the weather in the Central Continent was usually steady, experiencing rain was something welcomed rather than shunned.

Currently, Damien sat on the roof of Rose's residence and looked up into the clouds above, not minding the fact that he was getting soaked in the process.

It'd been years since he last experienced rain. Through some miracle, he'd avoided anything other than normal sunny weather ever since he fell into the dungeon. But he was always an enjoyer of rainy days.

The naturally gloomy atmosphere brought about by rain, the quiet pitter-patter of water impacting the ground, and the chill of raindrops hitting his skin, it all created an ambiance that truly allowed him to sort out his thoughts more peacefully.

Rumble!

Damien closed his eyes as thunder rang out above. With his entire body relaxed, he lay down on the roof and focused his senses on the rain falling on his skin.

'I can't tell whether Rose is a vixen or a shy maiden...but whatever it is, her split personality in bed sure is interesting.' Damien thought with a smirk.

Last night was indeed a wild ride he wasn't expecting. From the second Rose took control of the situation, their pace rapidly changed.

Gone was the copious amount of time spent on foreplay, the only thing remaining being hot passion as their bodies intertwined. Rose was far more active in this regard than Elena was.

But at the same time, her shy look couldn't be faked. Even though her desires were bold and ambitious, she didn't have the confidence to carry them out so brazenly. It was only after Damien helped her along that her talent in the art of seduction truly showed itself.

Damien smiled wryly. 'But I didn't expect her to suck me dry in a single night. Even after so many days with Elena, I didn't feel this tired.'

After all, his first time with Elena was as vanilla as it could be. They switched positions many times, but they weren't overly ambitious since they were well aware of their own inexperience.

But Rose had no such reservation. In fact, her mana was in full use the entire night. Damien was able to personally witness the wonders of illusions.

'This time, she only stimulated my sense of touch...but with her capabilities wouldn't it be possible to have multiple Roses at the same time doing...'

He shook his head as if that would shake off his stray thoughts. Having bedded two of his wives within a week of each other, his suppressed libido seemed to be acting up.

He was even of the mind to go find Ruyue and do her too, but as Rose had learned last night, Damien was oddly a stickler for old rules. He wanted his first time with every wife to be a special moment for the two of them. He didn't want sex to become meaningless.

It wasn't a bad thing, but it did mean that he was usually more passive than he would like to be. But that was something to be improved at a later date. For now...

'After so much thinking, I've finally realized how rough the next six months will be.'

If it was just the Cloud Plane, he wouldn't complain. But realizing that he needed to purge both Apeiron and Earth as well in the same span of time made him feel like his hair was actively graying by the second.

'Haa...logically speaking, I should have enough forces to purge Earth and Apeiron without worry. If I team up with Malcolm and the Adelaire Emperor, it'll be much easier. The problem is, those two worlds are low in strength.'

If the enemies in those worlds were at the same level as the ones in the Cloud Plane, taking care of them with just the forces available in those worlds would be problematic.

Of course, he could easily use the strength of the 4th classes under him to wipe out all the enemies, but he didn't want to do that. Just like the old saying went, teaching a man how to fish was far better than simply giving him a fish.

Both Apeiron and Earth were problems bigger than the Cloud Plane for different reasons.

For one, Earth's World Core hadn't lived long enough to gain sentience. As such, easily getting a list of traitors to execute like he did from Yun wasn't an applicable solution.

He'd have to personally scour the planet to root out the traitors.

Apeiron's problem was different. Even if the number was incredibly low, they at least had a few 4th class existences. And considering how there might be hidden experts that Damien wasn't aware of, the number could be larger than he expected it to be.

The problem with Apeiron was something Damien only hypothesized about. And that was, its World Core.

The history of Apeiron was far more brutal than that of the Cloud Plane, even though the latter was a more brutal place. The population of Apeiron was almost driven to extinction during the previous war.

And due to that, Damien began to have a suspicion. What if Apeiron's World Core was in a situation similar to Yun's? What if it had also been corroded by Nox mana over a long period of time?

Considering the damage Apeiron took in the previous Great War, it was best to assume that the degree of corruption was far worse than Yun's. In the worst case, the World Core was already fully corrupted.

'I'm itching to go as soon as possible, but I at least have to stay here until the purge officially starts. Only after that can I take my mind off the Cloud Plane for a bit.'

According to the plan, the purge would begin with the other four continents, since the largest congregation of Devil Worshipers was actually in the Central Continent.

Damien just needed to return by the time the purge reached its final month so he could personally pay a visit to the Eclipsing Shadow Sect.

'Hmm, although the immediate problems seem to be somewhat solved, I feel like I haven't sorted everything out yet...was I overwhelmed by my previous conversation with Tian Yang and the rest?'

It was a plausible explanation. After all, he finally learned about the grand scale of the universe and acquired a calling to the Abyss. It was natural for the sheer level of information to overwhelm him.

But Damien shook his head. He wasn't one to obsess about things like that. When the time came for him to step into a bigger stage, he'd do so naturally. Besides, his strength was already enough for him to claim himself the peak of the younger generation, or at least, close to it.

Therefore, his worries must've come from somewhere else. And that place could only be Niflheim.

Chapter 468 Conversations [6]

The total lack of information about Niflheim bothered him, and although the reasoning was justified, Asgard's limited cooperation did the same.

He found it difficult to believe that a resistance force could survive under the tyrannical regime of the Nox without being snubbed out, even if the Nox's arrogance took hold of them.

Still, as an outsider, these weren't matters he could carelessly speculate about. His worries would only be quelled once he stepped foot in that world himself.

'Actually, this is a perfect opportunity, now that I think about it. If the world was taken over by Nox, the World Core must've been completely corrupted. If so, wouldn't it be the perfect subject to test the limits of Devour?'

Damien grinned at his own wild imagination. Even if it was just the core, it wasn't a stretch to say he was thinking of devouring an entire world.

But, that was yet another factor that would depend on the situation.

Damien opened his eyes, immediately being forced to shield them with mana as the rain tried to land in them. He stood up quickly and pretended as if he didn't just embarrass himself, jumping off the rooftop.

'Phew, the past few days have been spent in peace, but it's almost time to start working again.'

There was only one thing left on the agenda, and that was to have another serious emotional conversation. Thinking about it, Damien almost wanted to run away again.

Pouring out his feelings to Rose was incredibly embarrassing, especially since it didn't achieve the desired effect.

Perhaps it was too naive of him to expect forgiveness right away. Due to Rose's nature, he was somewhat expecting her to be incredibly lenient with him.

But that was a misconception. Even if she was understanding, even if she wanted to support him unconditionally, that wasn't something for her to do while ignoring her own feelings.

If that was the case, then she wasn't his wife any longer, she was just a slave obeying her master's orders. So, even though he was a bit depressed about the fact that he wasn't forgiven, he was also happy.

The fact that Rose was able to earnestly admit that she didn't know how to feel was a sign of growth.

Damien sighed. He knew from the start that Rose's upbringing would lead to problems relating to how she viewed the world. No matter how fine she seemed on the outside, she was also a person with heavy emotional scars.

It was only today that Damien found about about Rose's contrasting personalities. Or rather, about the false personality she created while believing it to be in his best interest.

'The toxic environment of the Adelaire Emperor's imperial harem gave her a severe misconception about her duties and the importance of her position as the 'first wife.' That environment was both a blessing and a curse for her, though mainly a curse.'

It was a blessing in the sense that it allowed her to form her own personality and sense of freedom due to the sheer amount of oppression she faced. It also gave her a prime example of what a relationship shouldn't be, so she could actively work towards avoiding a future like that one.

But conversely, the effects that environment had on her morals weren't all for the better. Even though Rose knew what to avoid, it seemed like she was overcorrecting in order to avoid it at all costs. The worst part was, her trauma ran so deep that she didn't even notice.

Damien began walking aimlessly as he sunk into his thoughts. 'I can't help her this time. Any intervention from me would just fuel her false personality instead of helping her form her own views about how to act. This is something Rose needs to figure out on her own, or perhaps with the help of the other girls.'

Just as he had undone his heart knots through his own willpower, Rose needed to do the same. Even if self-realization was far slower, it was also the method that brought the most results.

Damien cleared his mind of all thoughts. The fact that he was useless in helping Rose's growth irked him to no end, but it wasn't something he could change. Since he had experienced something similar himself, he couldn't find any justifiable excuse to butt into the matter.

His eyes closed on their own as he focused on the rhythm of his steps. Nothing else seemed to matter anymore.

Tap! Tap! Tap!

The sound of his feet hitting the ground began to meld with that of the rain. That light pitter-patter crescendoed exponentially until the clouds above were producing a torrential downpour.

Crackle!

Lightning danced through the clouds, accompanied by the rumbles of thunder. As the sound entered Damien's ears, his steps began to mimic it.

Rapid like the crackle of lightning and powerful like the roaring thunder, he moved without direction through the mountain path before him. At some point, his feet stepped into the air as he continued his walk.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

His every step created a rumble as air combusted below his feet. He moved hundreds of kilometers with each push of his heel as if he was an immortal descended onto the secular world.

And as he did so, the storm raged even more violently.

Damien entered a trance-like state. He danced through the air while becoming the storm itself. At some point, it was no longer him mirroring the storm. No, it was the storm mirroring him.

As his steps became fiercer, the storm raged even more furiously. It got to the point where the sect's defensive formation activated on its own to protect the disciples from stray lightning.

But Damien was already too far in the sky for such detail to bother him. He was practically submerged in the cloud layer.

As he walked, his steps soon took him away from the Celestial Star Palace, the storm following after him with ease.

Finally, the disciples were able to regain a semblance of peace.

Confusion spread through the sect. What was that storm? Why did it suddenly become so strong? Any random bolt of lightning held the power to incinerate a normal 3rd class disciple. For such a storm to appear naturally was incredibly rare.

But there were a few within the crowd of disciples that realized there was no way for that sudden increase in strength to be natural.

Someone caused the storm to rage, but who exactly was it?

The answer was unknown to all but a few, but even those few who knew the truth of the matter still didn't understand what was going on.

Tian Yang looked up at the sky with a complicated expression on his face. His gaze followed the retreating storm that was headed in the direction of the Jade Heavenly Palace.

'Haa...what a troublesome disciple. I wonder what he suddenly gained insight on to cause such a scene.'

Tian Yang shook his head in regret. 'Even though the storm is powerful, it can't rage on forever. I hope you come to realize that someday, preferably before it's too late.'

Without another word, Tian Yang turned around and returned to his small pagoda at the peak of the mountain.

This avenue of Damien's growth wasn't something he could meddle in. If his disciple figured things out, it would be great, but if he couldn't do so...

Tian Yang was forced to resolve himself to take responsibility for the aftermath.

Chapter 469 Purge [1]

Even as curiosity surrounding the spontaneous thunderstorm exploded, Damien continued moving without a single thought in his mind.

In his current state, it was impossible for him to even consider thinking in the first place.

A strange thing occurred.

While Damien immersed himself in his thoughts, drifting aimlessly in the rain, he was submerging himself deeper and deeper into the atmosphere,

In the gloom and peace that a rainy day brought, his feelings began to mirror the weather around him. He melded with the season.

And as he started erasing thoughts from his mind and temporarily letting go of his worries, his immersion only deepened.

His steps mirrored the raindrops, his body becoming lightning. He and the atmosphere slowly became one.

As he rose to the air and subconsciously walked through the sky, the raging thunderstorm around him began to change.

Damien was the storm, therefore, the storm was Damien. His attributes were being mirrored by the Heavens themselves. And at the same time, Damien mirrored the storm.

The lightning of the sky became the lightning of his body, the thunder becoming the howls of his footsteps. Black lightning crackled through the sky, laced with golden black flickers of flame.

The phenomenon slowly grew in size as the parallel between the two thinned. By the time their paths became one, thousands of kilometers had been submerged into the darkness of the storm.

Boom!

A crackle of black lightning fell from the sky, impacting the ground in an instant and creating a crater tens of kilometers in diameter. Traces of reddish-black mana lingered in the air where the collision took place. But there wasn't just a single bolt of lightning. No, the area in Damien's immediate surroundings was transforming into a lightning storm.

But only a few stray bolts actually crashed to the ground. The target of these lightning bolts wasn't the earth at all.

No, it was Damien himself.

As the disaster around him grew more terrifying, heavier and denser bolts of lightning crashed against Damien's skin.

BOOM!

The color of the lightning was no longer the regular black that his lightning usually was. At the moment, this lightning had a striking white color. And every time another bolt struck him, that color became closer and closer to silver.

Meanwhile, Damien was barely conscious to even register the pain in his body. His senses were inadvertently spread to the surroundings, taking in the sensation of the surrounding storm.

Damien's mind was becoming clearer and clearer. The more he observed the storm, the impact its ferocity had on the environment below, the interactions between elements as the storm raged on, he felt infinitely close to realizing something new.

BANG!

A pure silver bolt of lightning finally descended from the clouds above. The second it made contact with Damien's body, his skin was seared off entirely.

His muscles began to char, suffocating him and causing immense pain, but Transcendent Regeneration kicked in immediately to offset the damage.

Waves upon waves of lightning mana entered his body, trying to crush him from the inside, but his Void Physique sprung into action and devoured everything that came.

Unknowingly and ironically, a heavily offensive combatant like Damien who rarely prioritized defense developed something akin to an absolute defense before his attacking capabilities could catch up.

But due to this defense protecting his body, the silver lightning that should've been deadly wasn't able to wound him enough for it to matter. Therefore, Damien's consciousness was never disturbed from its trance-like state.

As Damien continued to subconsciously observe the scenes around him, the lightning striking his body slowly changed from silver to gold. The damage he was taking was becoming extreme, to the point where it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say he had died and returned multiple times already.

And although Transcendent Regeneration was able to help him survive until now, it was still a skill that relied on mana. With the amount of work his regeneration was being forced to do, it was only natural for his mana capacity to run dry rapidly.

After all, it wasn't any normal lightning that he was being struck with.

Unfortunately, Damien couldn't sense the condition of his body at all. Even as he inched closer to death, his mind was enamored by the new sensation he was feeling.

And unknowingly, he traveled thousands of kilometers away from the Celestial Star Palace, heading towards the very center of the continent.

But that journey was cut short before it could be completed.

The figure of a woman appeared beside Damien without a single hint of how it got there. The woman looked at the scene around her and scoffed.

"This kid...I can't tell whether he's an idiot or a genius."

The woman rolled her eyes and held out her hand. "Well, since it's you, I guess I can help just this once."

Her finger curled gently, and before a single instant could pass, Damien's eyes rolled back in his head and he passed out.

The woman waved her hand, catching Damien's limp body with her mana before he could fall out of the sky. At the same time, her other hand waved toward the sky.

"Oi! He's already passed out, so there's no more need for you to be here. Scram!"

And as if heeding her words, the thunderclouds that were wreaking terrible destruction only moments prior vanished into thin air without a trace.

The woman clicked her tongue and looked back over at Damien. "Tch, I can't let him go in this state. Kid, you should thank this lady for being benevolent."

The woman's figure disappeared from the sky, taking Damien's figure with her. The seemingly apocalyptic storm that those in the Central Continent were forced to experience finally came to an end.

And unknowingly, Damien created another legend within the Cloud Plane. Rumors of that storm, of the insane damage it caused, spread rapidly. Tens of thousands of kilometers were scorched and destroyed, left borderline uninhabitable for many years to come.

And as rumors continued to spread, cultivators flocked to the scene to confirm the news with their own eyes. And once they did, another shocking revelation spread through the world.

This storm wasn't a natural disaster, it was something caused by a passing expert.

It was at that moment when people went wild. They no longer cared for the destruction and tragedy of the event. After all, this world worshipped the strong.

The fact that a hidden master appeared in the secular world again spoke to major changes. It meant that maybe some heaven-shaking battles would take place, battles that many were dying to see happen.

A trend started taking shape as excitement grew. Whether it be the common man or an experienced cultivator, everyone with even an ounce of determination began pushing their limits to become stronger.

It was a sensation so immense that it was curious how it originated from a single storm.

But it was naive to think it was just that. The denizens of the Cloud Plane, no matter how much decorum they possessed, were a warmongering people. Battle was their way of life.

Perhaps the storm wasn't actually an event that should've held as much importance as it did, but it appeared at an opportune time. A time when the proverbial pot was already on the verge of boiling over.

And as for the mysterious man who caused the pot to finally tip? Even though his strength was unknown, his actions granted him a title among the people.

Heaven's Wrath.

And like that, an entire month went by.

Chapter 470 Purge [2]

Even after an entire month, there was no news of Damien's whereabouts. It was as if he vanished along with the storm that he wrought.

But even without him, people were forced to continue moving. Since Damien already provided the list of all traitors on the Cloud Plane, the purge began only a week after his disappearance, starting from the Southern Continent.

And at the forefront of that purge were three women whose level didn't match their true strength at all. Naturally, they were Rose, Ruyue, and Elena.

Currently, the trio was in the Sacred Mountain Province of the Southern Continent. As its grand name suggested, it was the central province of the continent, and the home of the ruling Ye Clan.

But that clan was no more. For their sin of colluding with the Nox, they and many other big and small clans all along the continent had been exterminated. The Ye Clan was the final target on the Southern Continent.

But surprisingly, no news of the Southern Continent's events spread to the other four continents. The purge took place in secrecy, just as planned.

All spies and informants were killed, in fact, anyone who tried to leave the Southern Continent was killed without mercy. Even when sect after sect was extinguished, there wasn't even a hint of communication with the outside.

It was, of course, the work of Shangguan Yu. It wasn't by coincidence that he was known as a Formation Emperor. As long as he was present, he could turn any area into an inescapable death trap.

With his formations and Tian Yang's seemingly omnipresent eyes, it was impossible for anyone to escape their wrath.

The number of deaths piled up until close to two million traitors were put to death. And at the same time, thousands of cultivators who fought against them died as well.

Rose, Ruyue, and Elena stood at the forefront of the forces fighting against the traitors. Of those millions who were executed, at least ten thousand met their deaths to this trio alone. Their fighting power was astonishing, especially when they worked together. There were even some pseudo-4th class experts similar to the 11th Elder of the Xue Clan who fell by their hands.

Now that the small war was over, the three were taking the time to relax in a house that was designated just for them.

"Phew..." Rose wiped the sweat off her brow with a towel and sat down on the sofa behind her. "The Southern Continent sucks when you compare it to the Central Continent. The weather here is way too hot."

Ruyue walked out of the nearby bathroom with a towel covering her body. Perhaps the only curious things about her current appearance were the ice crystals floating around her at all times.

"You're at least lucky to practice more neutral elements. I'm completely yin-natured, and my body mirrors that. I feel like I'm going to die every second of every day."

Elena shook her head from the side. "I don't get it. It's not even that hot here. Back in my home city, it would get this hot every single day."

Ruyue shot Elena a glare. "This heat is being stimulated and exponentially increased by the ambient mana of the continent. It's impossible for your home city to reach the same temperatures."

Rose nodded in agreement. "The heat is really sweltering. If a normal person from earth was dropped here, they'd most likely melt on the spot. Even the common people of the Southern Continent are born with monstrous levels of heat resistance to cope. Little Elena, are you sure it's not just you that's abnormal?"

Elena turned her head away with a blush. Well, considering how she had affinities for Light and Life, Elena's natural body functions far exceeded that of any other person at her level. Regulating her body temperature to something comfortable could almost be done passively.

If Elena said this out loud, there was no doubt that Ruyue and Rose would call her a monster. Fortunately or unfortunately, she couldn't be bothered to do so.

"The Ye Clan was really something, wasn't it?" Rose suddenly mentioned.

Elena nodded heavily. "Their geniuses were surprisingly good. It's a shame they didn't come to the Empyrean Dragon Realm."

Ruyue scoffed in response. "What would it change if they went? It's not like you would've seen them considering how...busy...you were."

Elena blushed fiercely at Ruyue's jab and replied quietly. "S-still, I could've met them afterwards..."

Rose and Ruyue burst into giggles at Elena's poor attempt to make excuses. The atmosphere between the three became extremely harmonious as they spent time fighting side by side.

But just as the three of them relaxed after such a long conquest, Ruyue suddenly asked the one question that could immediately dampen their mood.

"Do you think he's safe?" She muttered under her breath.

Until this moment, talking about it was something none of them wanted to do, lest their concentration be disrupted because of their worry.

But now that they had a few weeks to rest before moving to the next continent, Ruyue could no longer hold back the question.

Rose sighed. "Of course, he's okay. Aren't you the one who knows best? What is your soul connection telling you?"

Ruyue looked down at the floor. The answer was the same as every other time she had been asked the question. His vitals were stable, as if he was peacefully sleeping.

But it was that stability that worried Ruyue. If he was doing anything, his vitals would at least show some fluctuation. For him to have such a steady pulse after so long...she was afraid for the worst.

But even though the three of them knew there was a problem, there was nothing they could do to help. Even Tian Yang, as powerful as he is, couldn't divine Damien's location.

So the only thing they could do was wait. Wait and use the blood of traitors to assuage their negative emotions.

And pray for his safety.

Elena sighed to herself. The current situation was the one she hated the most. Just like it was back then, when Damien was pushed into the dungeon, she was powerless to help him in any way.

They were forced to separate just as their relationship was being repaired, and Elena blamed herself for not being strong enough.

Resolve grew in her eyes. She didn't want to be weak anymore. Even though she was arguably at the peak of the younger generation in the Cloud Plane, that wasn't enough.

Because Damien already surpassed that peak. He was already stepping into the ranks of experts. If she wanted to stand by his side, she needed to throw away her current perception of the word "genius."

She needed to start seeing those heavenly geniuses as average stepping stones in her path. She needed to set her goal as the peak genius in her heart, the one who would always surpass those around him.

And she needed the strength to do so with dignity.

She could no longer stay hesitant about leaving. Due to this situation, her decision was made.

'After this purge is finished, I will leave. I will leave and then come back stronger than ever before. At that time, I will stand by your side with confidence. Just...I hope I can see you at least once before I go.'

Her thoughts were only known to her, but her sentiments seemed to catch the sympathy of the surrounding mana.

Her strong emotions...perhaps they would truly be able to reach the one they were intended for.