

# Void 471

## Chapter 471 Partial [1]

On a small island submerged within a sea of clouds, there stood a small cabin with humble origins. And within that cabin, a man sat cross-legged, submerged in deep concentration.

'This isn't right...where is that feeling...'

His thoughts raced constantly, unable to slow down for even a second. That feeling used to be so vague, but after a month of tireless effort, he was getting closer and closer to realizing it.

"Haa..." The man's eyes slowly opened, revealing a mix of amethyst and red as he sighed in frustration.

'Failed this time as well...but I'm close. If I just stumble upon a single spark to guide my way, I'll get there in an instant.'

He shook off his thoughts and stood up, exiting the cabin and going to sit at the shore of the small lake outside. As he did so, he stared past the trees blocking his vision into the cloud layer outside.

'Phew...to think it's been an entire month. That old lady still won't let me leave.'

Damien sighed again. Truthfully, he woke up not even a full day after the catastrophe he caused. After all, the reason he fainted was only that that Demigod woman knocked him out. The problem stemmed

from the woman in question. No matter what he tried, she wouldn't let him leave the island. Instead, she would come back every day to ask him the same question.

"How did you do that?"

The water in front of him twisted into the face of a woman and spoke. However, at this point, Damien wasn't even scared anymore. This woman would always pop up in the most random ways, so he had long gotten used to it.

Damien rolled his eyes in response to the question. "I don't understand why you're so obsessed with this. I already told you I just got a little spark of insight."

The woman scoffed. "A little spark of insight? Do you even understand how arrogant you sound?! Even if you're the Star Master, it's wholly illogical for you to grasp even an entry-level understanding about Laws!"

"Ah, so that's what it was. Why did it take you a whole month to finally fess up?" Damien questioned back.

The woman looked at him with a deadpan look in her eyes. "Kid, if you didn't realize what you'd done even after having a Heavenly Tribulation summoned to smite you, you'd be too much of an idiot to be the Star Master."

Damien smirked at her words. It wasn't like she was wrong, he always had an inkling about what he did. But getting confirmation from a Demigod was the best way to affirm his thoughts.

"So that lightning was a Heavenly Tribulation, huh. I guess the universe didn't like that I was overstepping my bounds? Sheesh, if you're going to behave like that, then don't create a genius with such heaven-defying talent like me."

Damien flicked his fingers, summoning a black and white streak of lightning. The instant it appeared in the world, space collapsed and Damien's hand was burnt to ashes.

As Transcendent Regeneration did its job growing his hand back, Damien turned his attention back to the shocked face of the female Demigod.

"What? Surprised?" He said gloatingly.

The female Demigod didn't reply immediately. She stared at his regrowing hand and stammered to get her words out.

"You...you...ARE YOU CRAZY?!" She finally managed to roar, the panic in her voice evident.

"Not only were you blasphemous enough to try and control Laws using your own power as a 3rd class, you even stole the Tribulation Lightning that came to kill you?! Wait, in the first place, how did you manage to steal lightning belonging to the Heavens?! This is preposterous!"

Damien looked away, bored. Although he hasn't heard this speech before, he had been anticipating it for a long while already. The second he realized the identity of the lightning residing in his Mana Heart next to his Void Flames, he knew this moment would come.

'It's not like I even wanted that lightning or anything. It just kept charging into my body and feeding itself to the Void Physique. Isn't that basically just giving me a free lunch?'

Well, considering the pain he had to go through to acquire the lightning, it wouldn't be apt to call it a "free lunch." But at the same time, since he was too focused to even register that pain, it was wholly apt to do so.

Still, he didn't voice his thoughts out loud. If the woman in front of him knew what he was thinking, he was guaranteed a beating.

Damien shook his head wryly. "Lady, when do you plan to release me from here? I have duties to attend to on the surface, you know."

The female Demigod crossed her arms defiantly. "And why should I let you go? I've never seen a human as interesting as you before. Also, I have a name, so call me by it."

This time, it was Damien's turn to stare at her with a deadpan expression. From her demeanor, not a single person would assume that she was a being with insurmountable power. Also...

"How am I supposed to call you by your name if you haven't even told me that name yet?"

She was quite the airhead sometimes. He didn't know whether it was an act or not, but if it was an act, she was an Oscar-level actor.

The female Demigod quirked her head to the side and widened her eyes. A literal lightbulb made of mana appeared on top of her head.

"Ah! How could I forget?" She straightened her posture and did a slight curtsy. "This one is called Tang Lingzi, but you can just call me Sister Lingzi since I like you!"

"Is this how a Demigod is supposed to behave?" Damien questioned suspiciously as he watched her. "Aren't you supposed to be all high and mighty?"

Tang Lingzi's expression abruptly changed at his words. Her eyes became piercing and cold, her precious demeanor vanishing completely. As she looked down on him from above, it truly looked like she considered him an ant she could crush without even a hint of effort.

"Then, do you like this attitude better?"

Even the way she spoke changed. It wasn't necessarily her tone, but the power behind her words that changed. Every word impacted Damien with almost physical force, nearly causing his ears to bleed.

Damien shook his head and dispelled the pressure he was feeling. Naturally, it was only possible because of his Star Master status.

"No, the other version is easier to talk to. I didn't think you could make that kind of face."

"Right? As expected of me. Making humans cower is nothing."

Tang Lingzi's demeanor reverted to how it previously was in an instant, making Damien roll his eyes yet another time.

His gaze panned the island once more. In the past month, he'd gotten incredibly used to this peaceful scenery. As he stared into the lake below, he suddenly remembered something.

"Right, where's that so-called "cute disciple" of yours?"

Tang Lingzi smiled slyly. "Oho? Ohoho? You're calling my disciple cute? Did you really fall for her at first sight?"

Damien looked back at her placidly. "I was clearly mocking the way you call her. How do you expect me to fall in love with someone I haven't even seen or talked to yet?"

Tang Lingzi's sly smile widened. "Oho? You haven't seen or talked to her? Are you sure about that?"

Damien's eyes narrowed. "What's that supposed to mean? How can I interact with someone whose been on this hidden island their whole life? Who is she anyway?"

"Hmm...not telling! She's away running some errands right now, so you'll never get the chance to take her heart!" Tang Lingzi said with a wink.

Damien's brow twitched incessantly. If she wasn't going to tell him anything, why bring it up in the first place?! Besides, why did she immediately assume that he wanted to do her disciple? He didn't know how much longer he could stand this constant teasing of hers.

"I really do need to leave, though. I only have 5 months left before I start for a new journey, so I need to wrap up all my loose ends before then."

Hearing him change the topic, Tang Lingzi's eyes became serious. No matter how powerful or eccentric he was, he was still a country bumpkin in the end.

"You think you can leave? It seems you don't understand the state that your body is in right now."

Chapter 472 Partial [2]

"You think you can leave? It seems you don't understand the state that your body is in right now."

Her words sounded ominous, leaving Damien tilting his head in confusion. Tang Lingzi sighed and rubbed her forehead.

"Alright, if it's just for a little while, I think you can handle it. Come, follow me."

Without another word, she wrapped Damien in her mana and rapidly arrived at the edge of the floating island. Only then did she stop.

"This is the exit to the island. You wanted to leave, didn't you? Go ahead."

Damien stared at her suspiciously. Her previous words combined with the way she forced him into confinement for the past month really hinted at something suspicious, but he had no way of finding out what that was if he didn't do as she said.

So, he carefully left the protection of Tang Lingzi's mana and walked outside the boundary of the floating island.

BOOOOOOOOM!

A thick golden bolt of lightning appeared out of thin air and struck Damien square in the chest. The pure white clouds in the surroundings rapidly changed into a murky greyish-black color, and the ambient mana of the world created a vortex surrounding his body.

As things were going, another natural disaster would occur because Damien was simply standing outside the island barrier. And only after seeing this did Damien realize what Tang Lingzi was saying.



'Is this because of my incomplete comprehension?' Damien wondered as he signaled Tang Lingzi to let him back inside the island.

Once she opened the barrier, he immediately teleported inside. And as if it never existed in the first place, the forming disaster dispersed.

"Do you see what I'm talking about now?" Tang Lingzi mocked haughtily.

Damien nodded sheepishly. If he knew from the start how troublesome his presence had become, he wouldn't have complained.

"But...why is it like that?" He asked. Even if he had his own conjectures, Tang Lingzi most likely knew the whole truth. It was easier to ask her than to ponder on it for ages, and he didn't have much time at the moment.

Tang Lingzi sighed. "Somehow, you've integrated yourself with the world far more than even a 4th class would be able to. Naturally, this is due to your abilities as a Star Master.

"In normal cases, this wouldn't mean anything. Even if you've integrated yourself with the world, you'd only be able to use some more of its power when fighting on its surface. But your case is different."

Tang Lingzi paused and took a deep breath before continuing.

"I don't think you understand the significance of your achievement at all. To put it into perspective, I've never heard of a 3rd class who was able to grasp and even utilize even a small portion of Law power.

"Anyway, the fact that you've done so exponentially increases your synchronization with the world. Now, even stepping into that world normally would mean having the world embody you. Your lightning, your flames, and that terrifying power that hides in your body, all of it starts to pervade the world as the new Law.

"But even if you've grasped a portion of Laws, you aren't able to control it because of your lacking strength and qualifications. If you try to use Law power outside the Cloud Plane, you'd immediately die from the backlash, though I can't say whether or not your illogical healing skill can fix that damage or not.

"Essentially, what you need to do now is consolidate and compress. Fully comprehend the small insight you've gained and suppress it so that it obeys you. Only then will you be able to walk through the world normally."

Damien earnestly listened to her speech. As he expected, she took what he already guessed and expanded upon it. From the start, he realized that this incident had to do with his power as a Star Master.

Because he felt like he could control the world's force at will unlike before. His authority as the Star Master increased by a dozen fold. Or rather...

'I've been thinking of the title Star Master all wrong.'

He finally realized it. His thoughts were so constrained inside the realm of common sense that he didn't even think to expand upon his capabilities as a Star Master.

But that was wrong. His power, his qualifications, they didn't matter at all. As his title suggested, he was the Master of this world.

On the Cloud Plane, he was akin to a god.

The small island rumbled as if an earthquake was taking place, a formless essence invaded Tang Lingzi's barrier and rushed into Damien's body, inadvertently causing it to float into the air.

Seeing the changes, Damien realized he was on the right path. If he continued like this...

'The second I was able to give commands to a being like Yun without a hint of trouble, I was able to utilize everything the Cloud Plane has to offer. That is what it means for a world to be contractually bound to a Celestial. The only reason I've been limited in my utilization is because of the constraints I subconsciously imposed on myself while thinking realistically.'

It was quite the ironic situation. The reason why he was unable to draw out the World Force with ease was because he constantly stopped himself from getting conceited.

In a circumstance like this one, the only way to realize his full potential was to let his arrogance out in full bloom.

And it wasn't like Damien didn't have any arrogance. He was a man who talked to Demigods as if they were normal old fogeys. If that wasn't a blatant display of arrogance, nothing was.

But since Damien had met so many enemies who fell because of their arrogance, he always kept his in check. Especially when it came to his power level, since even he could see how rapidly he improved compared to the rest.

The ones he usually compared himself to, those like Long Chen and Xue Feng, they were definitely heaven-sent geniuses that were rarely seen.

But it was an unfair comparison from the start...

For them.

It had to be said that these geniuses trained diligently from a young age. Those like Long Chen usually hit 1st class before the age of 10. Due to the difficulty in leveling and the need to face life-or-death situations to do so properly, their progress would inevitably stall in the 3rd class range and increase at a slower rate.

This was why they were still at 3rd class over a decade after they hit 1st class. In fact, since they were infinitely close to reaching 4th class already, they were considered as one in ten thousand geniuses.

But what about Damien?

First class? He only achieved that in the dungeon. Compared to the 15 or more years that those geniuses spent to reach their level, Damien had only spent a little over 5.

With this kind of speed, how could he not be arrogant?

And even if he was arrogant, he wholly deserved to be.

Damien's eyes opened with a flash. A heavy pressure descended on the floating island, causing cracks to spread wildly. From the looks of it, the island would collapse soon.

World Force descended from the Heavens in droves, covering Damien's body and allowing him to bask in the essence of Laws and Natural Forces. It wouldn't take long for him to gain control over his power.

Looking at his figure floating in the air, Tang Lingzi's expression was truly a sight to see. Her mind was in utter chaos as a single thought took control over her.

'Is this kid...receiving a Baptism?!'

Chapter 473 Partial [3]

World Force continued pouring into the small island in droves, nearly shattering it to pieces. If it wasn't for Tang Lingzi's Divine Power, the place would've already fallen to the surface.

Damien stood in the air, his body being invaded by the World Force in an extremely chaotic manner. If it wasn't for his Void Physique regulating the incoming energy and making it more compatible with him, Damien's body would've long exploded.

And because the Void Physique made Damien's intake limit nigh-infinite, the World Force vortex swirling around him only continued to increase in size.

'Hoo...this is...'

Even though he looked unconscious, Damien's mind was still working at full power. Along with the World Force, he was receiving countless insights about various things.

That's right. There was no need for Damien to remain clueless about everything anymore. Since he was connected with Yun, a World Core that had been alive for tens of thousands of years, he had access to a massive library of knowledge.

If he were to remain ignorant even after having access to this level of information, it would be his own fault for being too stupid to understand his abilities.

And because he was finally able to realize his idiocy, the first thing Damien did was enter that library and begin taking in all the relevant information it held.

Disregarding most history-related facts and things that would only affect the Cloud Plane, Damien absorbed everything from information on the previous Great War to battles of experts which he could watch to gain insight. Most of all, though, he focused on general knowledge about the wider universe.

His knowledge of the Sectors, the Abyss, even the Heavenly World that was only mentioned in rumors, all of it increased exponentially. And at the same time...

[Your Legend has been greatly advanced.]

[Your Legend has been greatly advanced.]

[You have acquired the title, [Heaven's Wrath] through spreading your Legend.]

[You have received Partial Acknowledgment.]

A flurry of system notifications flashed across his vision. Although Damien was still unaware of what a Legend signified, he could understand the latter two notifications.

He could feel the power coursing through his body after receiving the Heaven's Wrath title. His lightning had been strengthened by manyfold. As for the final notification...

The World Force vortex encasing Damien's body slowly diminished until no trace of it remained in the atmosphere. Damien's floating body also descended to the ground.

"Phew..." Tang Lingzi sighed in relief. Luckily, her little paradise didn't get destroyed. But, the circumstance she just witnessed was far too odd to just let go.

"What have you done?" She questioned in a small voice. It seemed like all her dignity and playfulness vanished. Neither of the personalities she had previously shown Damien were in front of him right now.

Instead, Tang Lingzi was completely subservient.

Damien looked at this new version of her curiously. He couldn't understand why this Demigod would act anywhere close to subservient to him, who was far weaker than her.

He looked into Tang Lingzi's eyes and finally noticed something off. Her gaze wasn't necessarily focused on him, it was more like she was enamored with just his presence.

The thought suddenly clicked in Damien's mind.

World Force was a strange energy that wasn't mana at all, but at the same time was like the purest kind of mana. Even though it differed from Divine Power, it was an energy on a similar or even greater level.

And just now he had been baptized in that energy. His overflowing aura wasn't something anyone could resist, at least not while they were on the Cloud Plane.



'But that doesn't mean I'm invincible.' Damien thought as he retracted his aura. 'It shouldn't be hard for Tang Lingzi to break out of this state if she tries, no matter how much World Force I can utilize, my control will still be reflective of my own abilities. Subduing a Demigod is still far away.'

But unlike what he expected, Tang Lingzi didn't immediately break out of her dazed state. Instead, she stared at him with a hungry look in her eyes. Out of nowhere, two fox ears and nine tails appeared on her body.

Damien raised his brow in confusion. "What was that for?"

He already knew Tang Lingzi wasn't human, since she often referred to humans by their species name, but he didn't know why she suddenly showed her ears and tail. There was no point to it.

Tang Lingzi's eyes finally cleared up after hearing his question. "Hm? Oh, this? It's just something that happens when I get too excited. Don't mind it."

Tang Lingzi returned her attention to Damien's body and slowly crept forward. "Not only were you able to receive a Partial Baptism with such weak strength, you were able to overcome it and take 100% of what it had to offer. This body is incredibly special..."

Her words trailed off, a hint of drool dripping down her chin and falling in between her voluptuous breasts. Although the sight would've been seductive in any other situation, Damien couldn't feel the slightest bit of arousal.

'She will devour me.' He thought instantly. And he wasn't talking sexually at all. No, Tang Lingzi's eyes looked like she was going to cut him open and devour all his secrets. That wasn't the expression of a woman, but that of a mad scientist.

'I need to leave expeditiously.'

Damien backed away from the voracious Tang Lingzi slowly, spreading his awareness as he did so. The second he did, he smiled widely.

"Well then, Sister Lingzi, I hope to see you again later!"

His body began to disappear. Due to the World Force Baptism from earlier, the defenses that trapped him on the island had weakened considerably.

Seeing his movements, Tang Lingzi's eyes cleared up. "Wait! Where are you going?!"

Damien rolled his eyes. "Didn't I already tell you? I'm a busy man making big moves. I don't have time to sit here idly. Anyway, I'll be going now. Tell your cute disciple I said hi!"

As his final word fell, Damien's body completely vanished from the floating island. Left alone, Tang Lingzi blankly stared into space.

And out of nowhere, she broke out into a fit of giggles.

"This kid...is quite interesting." She spoke to herself with a mysterious smile. "And he dares tease me? How audacious."

Even though she sounded offended, her smile never left her face. And with that same smile, she turned around and continued talking.

"My cute disciple, did you hear him? Why didn't you respond to his greetings?"

The bushes rustled in response to her words. The shadows they cast on the ground coagulated and formed the figure of a woman.

"Master...how can I face him like this? I'm afraid he won't see me the same way anymore."

Tang Lingzi rolled her eyes. "You always say the same thing, but have you really committed any crime against him? Haa...you are far too stubborn."

The black-haired woman shook her head. "Even so, I cannot face him right now. Perhaps one day..."

Her gaze shifted to the horizon, looking in the direction that Damien most likely teleported.

As for her thoughts as she did so? They were only known to her.

Chapter 474 Partial [4]

Whoosh!

Damien's figure reappeared in the sky above the Cloud Plane. His location was the Southern Continent, the Sacred Mountain Province that was once ruled by the Ye Clan. His gaze panned the area, his awareness spreading in full.

Within an instant, the entire Southern Continent was present in Damien's gaze.

'Hmm, looks like they finished everything over here.' He nodded to himself. 'This level of power is great too.'

Although it was limited to the Cloud Plane, the power he felt as he teleported untold kilometers with barely any mana consumption and spread his awareness to cover an entire continent was especially pleasurable.

'Then, if I do this...?'

Damien sent World Force into his heart and pressed it into the area where he felt his mysterious connection with Ruyue. In that instant, the view in front of his eyes changed completely.

In a battlefield engulfed in flames, three women valiantly cut down their enemies. As if they were the central position of the battle taking place, the movements of both enemies and allies revolved around them.

Damien sighed to himself. 'In the end, the three of them still joined the purge. Their determination to get stronger is really admirable.'

Although Damien and the experts of the Cloud Plane always referred to the purge as if it was something easily accomplished, the truth was different.

It was a war on the traitors. Because the aforementioned group was always paying attention to war on a universal scale, their perception of the ongoing operation was naturally skewed.

Damien shook his head. 'This is good experience. I've already experienced both Great Wars through various encounters, so I at least have a basic grasp of how it works. As for large-scale battles, I've been used to those since the beginning.'

The dungeon was a place where it was him against the world. Large-scale battles had always been his specialty, it was just that he rarely got to experience them.

'Haa, even if I want to join in, I have to go to Apeiron and solve the matters over there. Should I leave them or take them with me?'

He didn't ponder it for long. Instead of deciding for them, it'd be easiest to simply meet them and ask.

As he had the thought, Damien's figure vanished from the skies of the Southern Continent, unnoticed from start to end. When he reappeared once more, he was on the Eastern Continent, hovering above the battlefield he just witnessed.

"Kill! Kill! Kill!"

"Glory to the Wushuang Sect!"

"Brothers, take down those filthy traitors and become true warriors!"

Various exclamations and battle cries traveled through the battlefield. The sound of weapons clashing against each other created a horrid cacophony of sound as it entered Damien's ears. Combined with the heavy stench of blood, it wasn't a pleasant place to be.

Damien's nose wrinkled in disgust. 'Even if I've experienced it before, war is never a sight you want to see. Yet, it's inevitable.'

War was both a blessing and a curse for those living in this universe. It was a horrid time period filled with death and destruction, where countless people would lose their lives and livelihoods.

When it was a universal war, whole planets were destroyed frequently,

But at the same time, war was an opportunity.

In this universe where killing meant leveling up, where bloodshed was synonymous with strength, war was something many people looked forward to.

Because even if one had the worst talent imaginable, the amount of killing one could do on a battlefield was bound to allow one to level. Due to this, "fear" of war didn't exist. Even though the risk was evident, there would never be a lack of soldiers signing up to join the armies during war times.

Damien cleared his thoughts. It'd be hypocritical to look down on those who courted death in this way since he shared their excitement for battle and leveling. Instead of dwelling on it any longer, he spread his awareness and found his women on the battlefield.

'There you are.'

His figure vanished and reappeared in the center of the battlefield, where a large empty area had been formed.

As the enemies continued to circle around the perimeter of this area, Damien soon came to understand that they were avoiding the range of Rose's Illusory Throne skill.

'Smart, but not smart enough.'

Just as he thought it, hundreds of tree roots burst from the ground and entangled the surrounding enemies. A large tree emitting strong vitality rose from the ground behind Elena at the same time.

Ruyue's hand moved through the air gracefully, drawing a trail of iceflames and death mana that covered the tree roots, instantly killing those that had been captured.

And to put the icing on the cake, Rose spread her illusions to those further away, drawing them into the death trap with them being none the wiser.

'What a deadly combination.' Damien thought proudly as he watched them. He never expected their teamwork to be so good, but it was only natural considering how they spent the past month or so fighting side by side.

As more and more enemies died and were replaced by others, Damien became tired of just watching.

'Hmm, they'll have plenty of chances later, so a little kill stealing now won't hurt, right?'

His eyes flashed, the amethyst and red within swirling and creating various strange patterns.

A formless pulse left his body, spreading into the surroundings. And the second it did...

Splat!



The disgusting sound of bodies being smushed resounded. Tens of thousands of surrounding enemies were reduced to meatpaste.

As it happened, Damien descended from the sky and met his three beauties.

"Yo! Missed me?" He smirked. But his expression vanished as soon as he saw the cold glares he was receiving from the three.

"I-I'm sorry?" He stuttered, not knowing what to do. This wasn't the reunion he was imagining at all.

"Hmph!" Rose snorted and turned her head away. As if on cue, the other two followed suit.

Damien smiled wryly. "Well, I understand why it's like this but I can only explain my circumstances later. For now, how do the three of you feel about visiting Apeiron?"

Rose's eyes widened unintentionally. Before she could even start giving Damien the cold shoulder, she was forced to stop.

"R-really? We're going back?" Rose questioned suspiciously.

"Mm." Damien nodded. "Now that the allied forces are cleaning up the Cloud Plane, there's no reason for us to stay as well. We need to clean up Apeiron and Earth before they finish up here."

This time, it was Elena's turn to be surprised. "We're going back to Earth as well?"

Damien nodded once again. "Of course! These are two worlds that are or will be bound to me. Isn't it natural that the Star Master keeps the world safe?"

Hearing his words, the girls slowly came to understand his purpose as well. But since they didn't know about the Niflheim raid that would occur in 5 months, it was normal for them to be confused.

But the main hesitation that the three of them shared was the fact that they'd have to leave the battlefield. Since their power was showing noticeable improvements already, they wanted to continue.

And Damien solved that hesitation before they were even able to voice it. Cleaning up the two worlds meant they'd still get to constantly battle. And since the forces of those worlds were weaker, they'd have more prey for themselves.

"Good!" Rose exclaimed with a smile. "We can show little Ruyue around our home worlds while power leveling at the same time! It's the perfect plan!"

Damien grinned. "Right? Not to brag, but your husband has become a genius in this past month."

"Oho? A genius, you say? I'll be needing proof of that later." Rose retorted.

Damien nodded. "Later, then. For now, I'll send you guys back to the sect so you can prepare to leave."

Rose and Ruyue nodded in agreement. And since they agreed, Damien immediately teleported them to the Celestial Star Palace.

As for Elena...

"Damien, I..." She struggled to get the words out of her throat. The firm decision she made only a few days prior was crumbling now that she'd seen his face.

Damien observed her seriously. Her hesitation and desire, he could see it all. And knowing her personality, he knew she would fold if he didn't say anything.

"Go." He said lightly. It was only a single word, but its meaning was infinitely deeper.

Elena's eyes widened. "You...!"

Damien smiled. "I've known for a while, though I don't know the details. If it's something you wish to do, then go. Don't worry about me."

Elena frowned. "But..."

"How about you spend the next few months with me? We'll slay enemies and enjoy ourselves to the fullest. Only after we've made enough good memories are you allowed to leave me."

Elena looked at Damien seriously, trying to force the tears forming in her eyes to disappear.

Damien gently wiped those tears off her face. "I know we have a lot to talk about, but let's put it off for now and enjoy ourselves. When it's time to get serious, we can truly spill everything in our hearts and start our relationship anew. Until then, you are mine and I am yours. What else is there to talk about, right?"

Elena smiled gently and nodded. "Mm. As long as you are mine and I am yours, there's nothing else in the world that matters...ow!"

Her sentimental words were ruined by a light flick on her forehead. "Idiot, don't you have a goal? Never stop pursuing your goal because of me. Just trust me to have your back as you chase it."

Damien snapped his fingers with a smile. "Anyway, no need to get teary-eyes yet. These next 5 months...I'll make sure to completely defeat those tears."

And as his words ended, Elena's body also disappeared from the battlefield, returning to the Celestial Star Palace.

Left alone, Damien looked around placidly. "As I thought, war is annoying. Let me get rid of this scourge before I leave."

His hand waved through the air, a mysterious force pervading it along with his movements.

And with that single motion, every enemy that was at the 3rd class or below...

Died in an instant.

Chapter 475 Third Return [1]

At the peak of the Celestial Mountain, a small group of people were gathered.

Among them was a certain old man, whose sagely aura had been replaced by battle intent due to the recent environment.

Tian Yang stood with his two disciples, separated from the others that joined them on the peak.

"The two of you...you grew your wings long ago, and have been exercising them constantly. Although I have plenty that I still wish to teach you, I think that your paths will flow better if you discovered the rest for yourselves."

His eyes were sentimental as he spoke. Unknowingly, he had gotten far more attached to these disciples of his than he ever thought he would.

"Brat, you've only been here for a year, and most of that time was spent on your own. I'm hardly qualified to call myself your master." He said to Damien:

But Damien shook his head in denial. "Even if the time I spent with you was short, the benefits I gained were still tremendous. Not only my spatial abilities, but even my comprehension of my other facets improved due to your teachings. Plus, my mental development is something you contributed to a lot. Don't think I didn't realize what you did back then."

Tian Yang smirked. "Right, who would've thought the little brat from back then was finally able to grow into a man? However, you still aren't worthy of my little Yue'er. Beat me first, and then I'll consider letting you marry her."

"Master!" Ruyue shouted in embarrassment.

Tian Yang laughed uproariously. "Yue'er, you've been my disciple for many years, to the point where our bond has truly become familial. But even then, I wasn't able to break the wall you put up around your heart. The fact that you were forced to carry that burden alone was one of my biggest regrets.

"Luckily enough, this brat was able to do my job for me. Seeing the you that stands in front of me now, I am immensely proud of how far you've come."

Tears formed in Ruyue's eyes. "Master..."

Tian Yang shook his head. "Don't say anything. Although I wish I could watch over your progress forever, it's fine as long as you just visit me once in a while. Don't leave this old man in the dark, will you?"

Damien nodded heavily. Although their departure from the Cloud Plane didn't seem like it'd mean much, since they would be returning in 5 months, it was far more complicated than that.

In 5 months time, when the extermination plan begins, Damien most likely wouldn't have much contact with Tian Yang anymore. Hell, he might not even have contact with Ruyue and Rose.

In essence, it was a military operation. No matter how much Damien hated being tied down, he would need to obey his superior while the operation is ongoing, lest he messes up the carefully crafted plan that they would follow.

So even if, by some miracle, he ended up on the same team as Rose and Ruyue, he wouldn't be able to chat or joke with them as he usually did.

As for Tian Yang, he was one of the most influential people in the entirety of the Cloud Plane. His position would be far too high for someone like Damien to visit frequently.

The peaceful days would end in 5 months. The days of freedom and carefree life would vanish along with them. And so, Tian Yang gave his disciples an earnest farewell.

After speaking with Tian Yang for a little while longer, Damien and Ruyue returned to the main group, where the Supreme Fairy Paradise Master was saying goodbye to Rose and Elena.

When Damien arrived, the Paradise Master immediately turned her attention to him.

"Hm hm, S-class body, S-class face, I don't know about his personality, but it looks like you've scored yourself quite the treasure, eh?" The Paradise Master said toward Rose and Elena, whose faces immediately turned red.

"Boy, what do you think? How about leaving my disciples alone and playing with this little lady instead?"

Damien smiled wryly, but inwardly, he was vomiting everything he'd ever eaten. The feeling of being flirted with by an old lady...as not pleasant. As expected, none of the old people he met were normal.

But before he could say anything in response, Tian Yang appeared before him. "Old hag, leave my disciple alone. He isn't a man who'd fall for your petty charm."

"Petty charm?" The Paradise Master scoffed mockingly. "I remember a certain someone fell for this so-called petty charm so deeply that he pursued me for dozens of years before finally giving up. What was that man's name again...?"

The Paradise Master pretended to go deep in thought, causing Tian Yang endless embarrassment. But on the surface, he kept his cool. He couldn't show his weak side when he was supposed to be looking cool in front of his disciples.



"That man must've been a lunatic to pursue you. Instead of talking about lunatics so much, how about we properly send our disciples off? They seem quite busy."

Tian Yang gestured toward Damien, who rolled his eyes and stepped forward. The old man was way too obvious in changing the subject, but he decided not to mention it.

Instead, he turned around and faced the three girls.

"Ready?" He asked with a smile.

"Of course!"

"Mm."

"Y-yes."

With three different sounds of acknowledgement, the last and shakiest being Ruyue's, since she was still nervous about leaving the Cloud Plane for the first time, Damien faced forward and put his hand out into space.

"Warp."

Heeding his command, the space in front of him shattered into an oval shape. The chaotic void within slowly swirled until it perfectly moved in a clockwise motion, stably rotating.

Damien smiled to himself. 'The process of creating a portal is far less cumbersome now. Considering the distance between this world and Apeiron, the mana consumption has also decreased heavily.'

As he thought, the three girls turned around and gave one final bow to their masters. Damien observed the portal for a little longer before turning around as well.

"Old man, don't die to the trash infesting this world. Next time I see you, I expect you to be so powerful that I can't even see the wall anymore."

Tian Yang grinned in response. "It's arrogant for you to think you can see the wall even now, but very well brat. I'll accept your challenge."

"Good, then if I win, you let me marry Ruyue."

"Ha! You really think 5 months is enough time to catch up to me?"

"Definitely not," Damien replied firmly. His lips soon curved into a sly smile. "To catch up won't be possible, but I don't believe I can't beat you."

Tian Yang's grin widened. "Brat, you've become more arrogant since the last time I saw you. Though, it's not like I don't like this change. Now, get going already. The more time you waste, the less chance you have at defeating me."

"Tch." Damien clicked his tongue. '5 months, right? In 5 months, see how I make you lose face in front of Ruyue.'

Tossing Tian Yang one final battle intent-filled glance, Damien stepped through the portal. And the girls followed soon after.

After so many years away, they were finally returning to Apeiron.

Chapter 476 Third Return [2]

Cloud-free skies where the sun could freely spread its glory, a refreshing breeze, perfect temperature, and an overall peaceful atmosphere that couldn't be replicated.

Damien closed his eyes and took a deep breath. It'd be a lie to say he didn't miss this environment. Truthfully, the second his feet touched the ground, he felt like a huge burden had been lifted off his shoulders.

But that was simply reality.

The Cloud Plane was a place where even the ambient mana was laced with a trace of battle intent. Even when one wasn't on guard, they'd subconsciously stay vigilant because the ambient mana forced them to do so. Like this, every second staying in the Cloud Plane could be labeled training.

But it was a kind of subtle training that would only show results in the long run.

Experiencing Apeiron's calm atmosphere was actually the first time Damien even realized the constant tense state his body was previously in.

But currently, that didn't matter much.

Damien had a single goal in coming to Apeiron. Perhaps he'd visit some old acquaintances and sightsee later, but his first priority would never change.

Damien spread his awareness, easily covering tens of thousands of kilometers. He soon found an inconspicuous mountain a few hundred kilometers to the north.

"I'll go over there and try to connect to the World Core. My relationship with Apeiron is already far deeper than what I had with the Cloud Plane, so it shouldn't take long. This world is pretty much 100% safe for 3rd class beings, so you guys can wander freely without worry. I'll come find you when I'm done."

After receiving nods from the girls, Damien immediately teleported to the mountain. No matter how much he wanted to just spend time with them and relax, he couldn't allow himself to do so.

As long as the work was finished, he'd have plenty of time to relax. But for now, he needed focus.

When he arrived on the mountain, he found himself an inconspicuous cave to meditate in. And once he sat down, he immediately submerged his consciousness into the earth.

This was completely different from how he contacted the other two World Cores, but for some reason, his instinct as a Celestial told him this much was more than enough to catch Apeiron's attention.

And his instinct was soon proven correct.

His consciousness was dragged away from his body, appearing like a hologram in a massive cave where the World Core presumably resided.

[You have finally come.]

Damien's eyes widened. He didn't expect the World Core to immediately speak to him.

[We have been waiting for you for many years. You achieved your class as a Celestial within us, so we assumed you would bind us immediately.]

Damien rubbed his head sheepishly. 'I was an idiot back then and didn't know how to properly wield my power. In fact, I only recently learned what my authority entails. I apologize for making you wait.'

[You are forgiven. As you are the fated one, we shall follow you wholeheartedly. Please bind us with your authority.]

Damien's widened eyes grew even wider. This World Core...was far different from the World Cores he had met so far.

Earth was like a child, so nothing needed to be said there. As for the Cloud Plane, it was cold and calculative like a machine. It didn't care about its people, it only cared about survival.

But Apeiron was like neither. With the way it was practically begging him to bind it, he could infer that it had far more emotion than Yun did. Perhaps it even held endearing feelings for the inhabitants on its surface.

[You are correct. There was once a man who could communicate with us. Although the level of communication cannot compare to a Celestial such as yourself, he was able to freely speak to us and hear our voice.]

It instantly clicked in Damien's head. 'Kurt Galloway. That guy did something amazing again.'

Damien sighed. Kurt wasn't a Celestial, he was a normal Spatial Grandmaster. It would've been different if he could communicate with the World Core after forming his Divinity, but it was unprecedented for him to do the same beforehand.

Kurt's talent was astonishing even to Damien.

'So, because of the time you spent with that man, you were able to develop emotions?' He asked curiously,

[We believe it is so. That man was the only outside influence we have experienced before meeting you.]

Damien furrowed his brow. It should've been obvious that the conditions in which they spent their lives would influence their personalities, since that was a completely normal thing for humans, but the ones Damien was thinking about were World Cores. He didn't think the rules of mere creations could be imposed on them.

But maybe that was just another naive thought. If plants could become sentient and even gain human form, who was to say that World Cores couldn't have emotion?

Although he enjoyed having Yun as an assistant, he couldn't talk to Yun casually...ignoring the occasional snarky comment that the latter sometimes made.

Damien smiled. It looked like his journey as a Celestial would never become boring. If World Cores really had differing personalities, he wanted to see how many of them he could experience.

'Well, then. There's nothing more for us to talk about. Let's form the contract.'

[That is currently impossible. As you have guessed before arriving, we have been heavily corrupted by foreign mana. You must remove this mana first.]

Damien grinned. 'Nice. My mana capacity will increase yet again.'

After voicing his agreement to the World Core, Damien experienced the familiar feeling of his body being transported to the location of his consciousness. And just like that, he found himself physically standing before the starlight-blue World Core:

Well, at least a portion of it was the original starlight-blue color. Around 50% of the World Core was made up of disgusting inky black mana instead.

Damien wanted to whistle at the sheer scale of corruption, but unfortunately, he didn't know how to. Due to this, he was forced to settle for sucking in a cold breath instead.

"Damn..." he spoke out loud. "Last time, it only took around a day. This time, I guess I'll need a week or more."

Damien clicked his tongue in annoyance. 'These damn Nox messing up my timetable. See how I deal with you after I find out where you stay at from the World Core.'

Snorting once more, Damien put his hand into the inky black mass and activated Devour.

And he kept devouring for a week straight without rest. His body actually felt more invigorated by the time he was done, considering how his mana capacity surpassed the 100,000 mark by 15,000 units.



Two threads of mana, one from Damien and the other from the World Core, met in the middle and entangled with each other. An eternal bond was formed between them in that moment.

[It is our honor to serve you, Master. We look forward to seeing what you will achieve.]

Damien cracked his neck to the side. 'You want results? That's easy enough. Just direct me where to go, and I'll kill every Nox bastard and traitor that dares to step foot in this world.'

[That is our wish as well. Whatever assistance you require, we will provide it to the best of our abilities.]

Damien grinned in response. As information poured into his mind through his connection with Apeiron, he only had one thought running through his head.

It was time to go hunting.

Chapter 477 9[1]

On an unknown planet, so far away from the Cloud Plane that those residing there wouldn't even know of its existence, two men stood amongst a large pile of rubble.

"Is the job finally done?" One of them asked, wiping the sweat off his brow.

"Not sure yet. We need to check for any stragglers before we go, or else the boss will kill us." The other replied.

"Tch. That damn boss. If he's going to act like a tyrant, at least do it properly."

"It can't be helped. You know that's a Pseudo-Divinity we're working under. Even if he has no leadership skills, his power alone is enough to keep his subordinates in line."

The two men shook their heads in unison and stepped out of the rubble. As they did so, the scenery around them slowly came into view.

Calling it a wasteland would be far too generous. The scene around them was closer to purgatory than anything else.

The ground was charred and cracked as far as the eye could see. Small flames still raged as an aftereffect of the fire that had burned down all of this planet's flora. The sky was covered in black clouds made up of the ash from that flame, clouds that carried an insane amount of mana.

That mana turned the sky into a hell worse than the land. Mysterious phenomena and bursts of random elemental essences filled the sky. If anyone dared to fly into a sky like that, they'd be killed instantly.

And the most gruesome part of the image, the piles upon piles of corpses that littered the ground as far as the eye could see. The entire population of the world...was eliminated.

"This place has really become a hellhole. It's surprising that it only took a month to do it."

"Tch, don't mention it anymore. It still makes me feel disgusting."

"Paul, you're too sensitive." The other man spoke seriously. "We didn't choose our line of work, we were forced into it. It's either they die, or we die. This isn't a place where you can show sympathy."

Paul sighed. "I know, I know. But I can't change my nature so easily. You should know that best, Talias."

Talias grinned, his massive body tensing at his friend's words. "Right, you've always been a crazy bastard."

Their conversation was cut short by a strange sound coming from a point not far away. Curious, the two moved in that direction.

"He...!"

"Help! Somebody help!"

As they drew closer, the cries formed into words. The two looked at each other in surprise.

"A survivor! Who knew somebody would actually be able to stay alive through all that?" Paul sighed in admiration.

Talias shook his head. "Poor girl." He muttered under his breath. "You should've just stayed quiet."

The two soon arrived at the location of the cry. When they did so, they witnessed a small girl, no older than 16, trapped under a metal beam. Although her lower body was crushed, she held onto her vitality like a cockroach, not succumbing to death in the slightest.

When she saw Paul and Talias, her determined eyes were filled with rays of hope.

"Please help me! I will reward you handsomely if you do!"

Paul stepped forward. "Of course, little lady. Since we've found you, it's our duty to save you."

Tears formed in the girl's eyes when she heard his kind words. And as he drew closer and closer to her, her excitement became palpable.

Paul smiled when he saw her state. His hand went to the hilt of the sword on his hip. "Little girl, stay still. I will save you now."

A singular black line was drawn through the air, following the sword's path. When it reached its end, the air was filled with red.

"Now, you have been saved. This is the best escape from those nasty bastards. Your will to fight will only burden you further. I pray that you will live peacefully in your next life."

The girl's head dropped to the floor a few feet away from her body. As her blood dyed the charred ground red, Paul's lips slowly curved into a smile. But he suppressed it quickly.

Turning to Talias, he spoke in his usual tone. "Let's get moving. We need to see if there are any more survivors for us to save."

Talias shook his head, but still followed along. "Damn crazy bastard."

The two continued their journey, finding those who survived the catastrophe that shook this world and sending them off. But it wasn't as if they were alone in their search.

The world was covered with people who were doing the same as them. And it wasn't just this world.

If one was able to observe the wider universe surrounding this world, one'd be able to see the true scale of the catastrophe.

Not just a single world somewhere in the universe, but hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands of them...

All met similar fates to the small world that was still standing, the final one of its kind.

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Somewhere not far away from that small world, floating in the endless void, there was a large starship that was armed heavily for battle. Its sleek black design almost let it blend in with the surrounding blackness, making it a stealthy yet deadly weapon.

And considering its size as a vessel that could easily house hundreds of thousands of people, this camouflage ability wasn't something to be looked down upon.

"This place is no longer habitable. The mission is nearing completion."

In the control room of that starship, a man in a white suit spoke to the ship's captain, who sat at his desk placidly.

"Is the information confirmed? This isn't a small operation. There can be no mistakes."

The man in the suit shook his head and waved his hand, dozens of holographic screens appeared in the air, depicting different scenes.

But those scenes all shared a single commonality. They were scenes marred with destruction and gore.

"Of a total of 100 billion planets, we have discovered 132,627 worlds that were suitable for life. Of the 132,627 worlds, 63,385 have been conquered, 69,241 destroyed, and 1 remaining. Although the result isn't completely satisfactory, it is better than the expected estimate."

The ship captain furrowed his brows in thought. "Hmm, it is indeed desirable, but I'm afraid the higher-ups will push for more. What is the level of destruction for the worlds that weren't conquered?"

The man in the suit swiped his hand and changed the images on his holographic screens. Although the theme of the new images remained the same, they were now accompanied by statistics and analytic reports.

"The sustained damage to the worlds is substantial. This sector has been converted into a Dark Zone by the rampant mana from the destruction. However, there is a small number among them that are salvageable."

The captain skimmed through the data and nodded heavily. "Good. With these worlds, we should exceed the quota enough to satisfy those old geezers. And what about the final bastion?"

"It is the home of the ruling family. It has been left for last, as per the Commander's orders."

The Commander nodded. "Then that is all. No need to worry about the ruling family. I will mobilize Exadrion and take care of it myself."

The man in the suit's eyes widened in shock, but he didn't speak a word. Meddling in the Commander's decisions would only cause his death.

Getting rid of the holographic screens around him, the Commander stood up. His arms moved, his hands cupping into the shape of a diamond in front of his torso.

"Executor Bak, heed my command. Direct all personnel to do a final sweep of the area. After that, convene at the mothership for further instructions."

Executor Bak returned the same hand sign. "Understood, Commander. Per the Lord's Decree."

"Per the Lord's Decree." The Commander repeated sternly.

As Executor Bak left his study, the Commander looked out the window at the destroyed universe around him and sighed.

"This campaign will be a long one. I wonder how long they'll manage to resist this time?"

With that, he returned to his desk and sat down. His hand pressed down on the pristine wooden desk, causing a slight indent to form in its surface.



"Command: Activate Battle Mode. Destination: Inputted coordinates."

On his command, the study-like atmosphere of the control room completely changed. The wooden desk and floors retracted into the ground and were replaced by a spotless white interior.

The desk now contained a myriad of controls and holographic displays that showed the state of the starship. The walls also retracted into the ground, giving way to clear glass that showed a panoramic view of the starry sky outside.

The mechanisms of the ship roared to life, albeit quietly. Mana spread to cover the ship's exterior as it started to move.

It's destination? A world called Aurora.

Chapter 478 9[2]

"Mother! This isn't the time to keep acting like a Queen! We must flee!"

The anguished voice of a young girl echoed through the calls of the throne room as she begged. She sat on her knees, banging her head against the floor to show her sincerity.

"Everyone else is dead! Aurora is the only bastion of hope remaining for our people, and you wish to flee?!" The Queen responded furiously, ignoring the girl's pitiful state.

"Bastion or not, none of it matters anymore. Don't you understand by now?! There is no way for us to win against them!"

The Queen slammed her fist down on her armrest, causing a fierce shockwave to spread and push the girl back several meters.

"Enough! If I knew I was raising such a cowardly daughter, I wouldn't have put as much care into you as I did! To think you wish to abandon your people in times of crisis! Abominable!"

The Queen's roars filled the palace halls, causing the various servants and knights in the palace to feel both warmth and despair at the same time. It wasn't a small number of them that shed tears.

Among them, an old servant who had served many past generations of Queens and even the one currently ruling. An old high elf by the name of Sebastian.

He stood at the Queen's side, looking at the pitiful princess as she begged. He couldn't help but feel conflicted.

On one hand was a daughter who was desperate to save her mother, and on the other hand was a mother who could only stubbornly fulfill her duty as Queen. In this situation, neither of them would win.

'Haa...why did such a catastrophe have to fall on us?'

Sebastian thought back to the past few years. It hadn't even been a decade since the invasion started, but it was already their loss. The elven forces and those under them couldn't stand a single chance against the invaders.

'And here I thought we were powerful. Those bastards...they've planned well for this day!'

Sebastian's fists clenched so hard they drew blood as he thought of the invaders. It wasn't his first time seeing them, but it was his first time feeling so hopeless in front of them.

'During the previous war, they were only equal to us. How were they able to grow so much in the short span of 10,000 years?'

But it wasn't just their strength, it was their numbers.

'There aren't as many of those disgusting barbarian ones as there were in the past, but they have corrupted leagues more people within our ranks! Rather than losing a war, we fell to internal strife. How embarrassing!'

Even Sebastian, the most loyal subordinate of the Royal Elven Family, considered fleeing at one point, but his loyalty prevented him to do so.

'But now isn't the time for my Queen to be arguing...if she doesn't gather our forces to at least put up a final fight, then soon...!'

His thoughts were cut off by a massive shadow that covered the Heavens. Because the throne room of the palace had an open roof that embraced nature, they were able to witness it even from within.

Sebastian's face paled. It wasn't just him, but those of every warrior present on Aurora. No matter where on the planet they were, they could see the massive shadow that hung in the sky.

"People of Aurora, hear me. Your trial begins now. For daring to rebel against the will of the Lords, your punishment is death."

The Queen bit her lip hard as she looked into the sky. Although her face still showed fighting spirit, her hope was quickly draining internally.

'Why...what chance do we even have?'

Although she always said she was planning to fight with her people, her words weren't necessarily true. From the start, her only plan was to die with her people so that she would at least be somewhat absolved of her sins.

'I couldn't save any of you. I'm so sorry.'

The Queen shed a silent tear, her eyes quickly filling with flames thereafter. "It is time."

Her figure flashed, appearing beside the princess and grabbing her with a thread of mana. Without another word, the Queen dashed through the throne room until she reached an inconspicuous area of the wall behind her throne.

"M-mother! What are you doing?!" The Elven Princess screamed. But the Queen didn't listen at all.

She tapped on the wall randomly with varying amounts of strength, using fine mana control to deliver bursts of mana into its surface.

And as she did so, the shadow in the sky began to shift.

Large cannons appeared along the sides of the starship, a massive ball of light gathering at its front.

Without warning, three of the side cannons shot bursts of crystalline blue light that descended upon Aurora.

BOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

The massive explosion rocked the planet. A crater hundreds of thousands of kilometers in diameter formed in the surface of the world, killing billions in the process.

"Witness your fate before you meet it." The voice from the starship rang out again. "This is the only end for those who oppose Their regime."

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

Six more cannons fired at the same time, turning half of Aurora into a charred wasteland in an instant.

But the Queen ignored it all. With tears of blood streaking down her face, she used her body to endure the shockwaves that kept impacting her, shielding the Elf Princess in the process.

And all the while, she continued randomly tapping on the wall like a madwoman. It was to the point where even the Elf Princess questioned her sanity.

'So that is your decision, Your Majesty.' Sebastian thought to himself.

Without another word, he sighed and floated into the air. Feeling his movement, the Elf Queen turned to face him, giving him a final stern nod.

Sebastian smiled lightly. 'Until the end, I couldn't get rid of this sense of duty. Ah, what a stupid man I am.'

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

Six cannons fired again, but as they impacted the surface, Sebastian's aura flared, creating a large shield that protected the imperial palace. But even still, the shockwaves from the explosions incessantly threatened to crack the barrier.

BOOOM! BOOOM! BOOOOM!

The explosions that were randomly impacting the surface of Aurora started to come together, crashing against the barrier of the castle.

Without them realizing it, Aurora had already been destroyed. The only place left where life could persevere was the imperial palace.

BOOOM! BOOM! BOOOOOM!

"Keuk...!" Sebastian coughed out a mouthful of blood, cracks spreading across his barrier. But just as he was about to give up, he felt a pair of rough hands on his back. Mana poured into his body in droves, allowing him to maintain his protection of the castle.

"S-Sir Mica." Sebastian greeted while wiping the blood off his lips.

The knight named Mica shook his head in response. "Do not speak. Focus on maintaining the barrier. The Knight Order and the refugees from the Magic Forest will aid you as long as we can."

As Sebastian turned his gaze to the ground below, his vision was filled to the brim with elves. Magicians, knights, even common maids. They all stood watching him protect them, sending their mana into the sky so that he would never run out of steam.

Seeing them, Sebastian's bloody lips curved into a warm smile.

"Very well. If you are all putting your hopes into me, then I can only do my best to live up to them."

The strength of the barrier increased manyfold as Sebastian utilized the mana of those supporting him. The explosions outside were barely able to even rock the new defense.

And during the few minutes she received from the new barrier, the Queen finally finished inputting the commands necessary for activating the mechanism in the wall.

Voom!

It wasn't one sound, but two. One came from the throne room, where the wall in front of the Elf Queen and Princess began shining with blue light. As for the other...

The ball of light that had been gathering at the front of the starship finally took shape. It revved with such grandiosity that it caused a small earthquake on the surface of Aurora.



The Commander's voice blanketed the area soon after. "I must praise you for holding out until now. It isn't a lie when people praise your kind for your immense talent in mana. However, it all ends here. As a reward for surviving, I shall allow you to witness Exadrion's most powerful weapon, the World Destroyer."

The elves' faces paled instantly. The massive waves of mana emanating from that light ball were enough to crush weaker practitioners in an instant. Yet, that was only the mana leaking from the attack.

The actual attack...was aimed at them. Any hope they had of survival vanished in an instant.

"W-where is the Queen?" Mica stammered to Sebastian.

Sebastian looked down at the palace in defeat. "The Queen...is preserving hope for our race."

"Then that means...!" Mica's eyes widened.

Sebastian smiled bleakly. "We can only hope that she gets revenge for us in the future."

Mica gritted his teeth in anger. But before he could even speak, a womanly voice rang out from behind them.

"Who exactly are you wishing to get revenge for you?"

""My Queen!""

A group exclamation took place as those present voiced their surprise. In response, the queen simply shrugged.

"The Cross-Sector Teleportation Array is a relic from our ancestors. It's so beat up by now, there's no way it could carry the weight of two people. In fact, I wasn't even able to properly input the coordinates. I have no idea where she'll end up, I only know she'll be safe."

The Elf Queen looked back at the throne room and sighed. "It's a shame. I couldn't take my focus off activating the array, and after I was finished, I could only send her off immediately lest the array broke. She must be lost and afraid...I hope you can forgive your mother."

The poor Elf Princess who had been sheltered since childhood was now thrust into the vaster universe without even an ounce of protection. There was no way for the queen to not be worried.

Unfortunately, there was no time for her to worry at all. By the time her thoughts finished, the sky was covered in bright white light.

"Ah..."

A short gasp was the only sound the Elf Queen before that bright light completely enveloped her.

It was painless. Because the scale of the attack was so big, for the few tens of thousands that were still alive to experience it, it was painless.

But that didn't discount the amount of destruction it did.

A shining white beam of light pierced the world called Aurora, like a sword through the body of a man.

A hole was created through the center of the world as the beam faded. Cracks spread through the remaining two halves of the planet that desperately tried to stay together.

And then, they shattered altogether.

Aurora had been completely destroyed, all life on it exterminated along with it.

From the control room of the starship, the Commander indifferently gazed at the destruction he caused.

"With this, it is finished. Sector 9 has been completely annihilated."

Chapter 479 9[3]

The 9 Sectors that made up the observable universe were each home to a different dominant race, just like how Sector 3 was the domain of humans.

Sector 1 belonged to the Angels, Sector 2 to the Demons, Sector 4 to the Beasts, Sector 5 to the Dwarves, Sector 6 to the Giants, Sector 7 to the Spirits, Sector 8 to the Plant Races, and finally, Sector 9 to the Elves.

Currently, within the Sky Castle Luxurion, the main neutral zone in Sector 1 that was used for only the most important meetings and gatherings, a fierce discussion was taking place.

"Sector 9 is gone entirely. The area has been turned into a Dark Zone. According to the scouts we sent out, it's a complete Dark Zone, meaning it will never become inhabitable for living creatures ever again. Even if we were the ones to enter, we'd die within weeks." A golden-haired man spoke seriously.

He was joined at a round table by 15 other executives who represented major forces in Sector 1, but even though their affiliations differed, they all shared one characteristic.

The pure white wings on their backs that signified their status as Angels.

"This isn't good." Another man stated. "The Nox are making their move already, but we have no way to keep up with their movements. How is it possible that they annihilated an entire Sector within a single month?!"

"Don't speculate so much, Parsiel. How certain are you that this is the work of the Nox and not some catastrophic natural phenomenon?" A third man questioned.

The angel names Parsiel scoffed in bemusement. "Are you even listening to yourself? That is the most idiotic reasoning imaginable. Do not evade the issue just because you're a coward. Their mana has been identified at the scene, so it is guaranteed that this was their doing."

The first angel that spoke nodded in agreement. "They made no attempt to hide their tracks. It was almost as if they were mocking us."

"Tch!" The third man scoffed and turned away, not speaking any longer. But his silence didn't matter in the grand scheme of things, since the important conversations continued with those more willing to participate.

"Sector 9's destruction isn't something that should be hidden. We must communicate with the other Sectors and warn them ahead of time in case something like this happens again."

"Why can't we just order them to strengthen their defenses?"

"Even if our Sector is numbered first, we do not rule over the others. We cannot order them to do anything. Besides, not all the Sectors have the manpower to guard the entire periphery of their territory. And even if they did, there are many selfish individuals who wouldn't listen to us."

"What's the use of being selfish? Even if they are selfish now, they'll fall with the rest of us if we lose this war. What a bastardly mentality to have." Parsiel sneered. Even though he didn't say it to anyone specifically, the third man who spoke felt like he was stabbed with a knife.

Luciel, the first angel that spoke, opened his mouth once again. "We cannot make any drastic moves at the moment, for we have no information to go off of. The best we can do is warn the others and pray for the best. We aren't yet ready to engage in a full-scale war."

"What about the Assembly?" Another angel asked.

Luciel furrowed his brows in thought. "Although I wish to bring it forward, it won't be possible. The Assembly was already organized at the earliest possible dates. Because of the movements of the other Sectors' forces, things will inevitably be delayed until then."

"Tch. It must be those useless humans in Sector 3 again. Were they even able to receive word of the Assembly with their backwards technologies?" The third man scorned.

Luciel shook his head. "They are aware of the Assembly date, but I'm afraid they won't receive the message if we decide to change it. Unfortunately, Sector 3 was hit the hardest in the previous war. Their societal standard regressed heavily. Still, do not shame the humans. Even though their people had the most traitors among them, they also fought the hardest for the safety of our universe."

Parsiel nodded in agreement. "Although I have never been there myself, I have heard many rumors. Sector 3 is a land of geniuses despite their low level of technical achievement. It isn't a place to look down on. Haa, if only they could fix their Cross-Sector Teleportation Array, things would become much simpler."

"But we cannot rely on 'ifs' at a time like this. Since Sector 9 and Sector 3 are relatively distant from each other, there is no need to inform the Human Domain about what happened. They will come to know the truth at the time of the Assembly anyway." Luciel said.

The other angels all voiced their agreement. Even if the Human Domain was a reliable asset, that was only if they could rejoin the wider universe again. Compared to the wider universe, Sector 3 was a land of country bumpkins.

Whether it be in terms of spacecraft and mobile suit technology, teleportation arrays, or just general connection between Sectors, Sector 3 was the most lacking.

And the thing that isolated them the most was the fact that Sector 3 could no longer access the Dimensional Leaderboard.

'The Dimensional Leaderboard might seem simple, but it's the connecting point between Sectors and the main avenue that fosters cooperation between them. One's ranking on the Dimensional Leaderboard wouldn't just represent them, but their whole Sector. And if one managed to get into the top 10, their Sector would immediately be elevated to a powerhouse none would dare to offend.' Parsiel thought to himself.

'But it isn't just that. Even those who have no interest in the reputation of their Sector will still participate because of the rewards. The Contribution Points granted by the Dimensional Leaderboard can be used to exchange for a variety of things. And since the leaderboard is managed by the Universal Will itself, it is impossible to question it.'

Parsiel kept pondering to himself. The Dimensional Leaderboard and the system around it were the main ways those in the 8 connected Sectors grew stronger. It was a practical solution to the universal system's rule that one must kill to gain experience, making leveling far safer and more accessible.

But even though this method allowed for the mass production of talents, it dulled people's fighting spirits. Those who threw themselves into danger constantly weren't as common as they used to be.

And Parsiel was one of these people. As someone who experienced countless trials and tribulations to reach his level of strength while ignoring the temptation of the Dimensional Leaderboard, he particularly understood the necessity of these experiences.

And Sector 3 was a land where the Dimensional Leaderboard didn't exist. It was filled with practitioners who grew up in that brutal killing environment. If that was so...

'Then those in Sector 3 might be our most important fighting strength for the coming war. The rest of the angels look down on them. Even Luciel subconsciously does the same. However, I cannot allow hubris to cloud my mind.'

Nobody knew what the people of Sector 3 were doing, but that didn't mean they didn't deserve to know the events taking place in the wider universe. And if nobody else wanted to take the job of informing them...

'Then I'll do it myself.'

Parsiel left the Sky Castle Luxurion after the meeting ended and immediately took flight, arriving at the nearest long-distance teleportation array.

He didn't know how long his journey to Sector 3 would take, but he had a gut feeling.



A feeling that being on good terms with Sector 3 would be one of the best decisions he ever made in his life.

Chapter 480 9[4]

The skies of Apeiron were still peaceful on the surface, but if one gazed deep enough, they'd be able to see the storm taking place beneath. In various locations on Apeiron, massacres were taking place.

Within the hideout of a certain secret organization, Rose, Ruyue, and Elena stood together.

Shing!

A white crescent moved through the air as Elena rapidly swung her sword. With each movement she made, another enemy fell lifelessly to the ground. Behind her, Rose and Ruyue calmly walked through the musty halls of the hideout.

Rose spoke with a smile. "Want to know a fun fact? Actually, this organization has been trying to kill me for a very long time. They even coerced a portion of the nobles in the Adelaire Empire to rebel against Father. But since they didn't have any 4th class experts, their plans were never carried out."

Rose swiped her hand through the air, causing a wall to the side to disappear. The three women walked through the newly revealed corridor behind the wall and began a new battle. This time, Ruyue stepped up.

Iceflames rapidly covered the hall and suffocated those within. The burning chill of the flames combined with the powerful yin-attributed mana Ruyue gained through her contract with Lily truly turned the area into a freezing hell.

But the three girls walked through that hell unaffected. It was as if the suffering that the hundreds of enemies around them were experiencing wasn't real at all.

"I feel like I should be thankful to these people, though. If it wasn't for them, I wouldn't have needed to hide my identity while traveling, and I would've never met Damien on that escort mission. Fate is a weird thing sometimes, isn't it?"

Elena rolled her eyes. "This is supposed to be a serious operation, yet you can't stop yourself from recounting old memories? I mean, I know the difficulty level is basically 0, but you still have to show these guys some respect, right? At this rate, they'll cough blood and die of anger before we could even kill them, and that'd be a waste of experience points."

Rose shrugged without a care in the world. "Come on, don't these bastards at least deserve a little humiliation? My life was so annoying because of them!"

"You can humiliate them all you want if you just cast a few illusions. I remember you used to have some...interesting...hobbies back in the day."

Rose gave Elena a sideways glance and smiled sarcastically. "Is it really okay for you to talk, though? I remember you prepared a eunuch for Damien when he returned to Earth back then."

Elena blushed in embarrassment. "T-that was then and this is now!"

Ruyue's grin widened. "No, no. That's something I should be saying. I've already kicked my bad habits, but you don't seem to have made any progress at all."

Her gaze shifted to the hallway they just came from. Even though the cuts on the corpses were clean, there was no reason for Elena to slash more than once to take care of any of their current enemies.

The stray arms and legs strewn across the floor were simply the result of Elena playing with her food.

Elena turned away in avoidance, pretending she didn't see anything. And soon after, the trio finally made it to the end of the hallway.

"This should be it." Ruyue sighed. "It was annoying taking care of all the small fries until this point, so I hope that at least the boss is somewhat presentable."

Elena nodded in agreement. "Come to think of it, why did the three of us come together? Only one would be necessary to take care of this place."

Ruyue giggled lightly. "Well, a certain somebody heard that this place was the force that kept chasing her during her childhood and immediately dragged us along before even hearing Damien's explanation about their strength and numbers."

This time, it was Rose's turn to blush in embarrassment. Well, it was true that she got a little overexcited, but it couldn't be helped. Just being back in her homeworld for the first time in so long made her feel giddy.

Rose hurriedly walked to the front of the trio and pushed open the large stone doors in front of them. The only way to avoid her current shame was to completely divert attention.

And this boss man was the perfect opportunity to do so.

Because the organization's hideout was created inside an excavated old dungeon, the layout mirrored that structure. They had already passed through all the mobs present in the other rooms, and now, in the most cliché manner possible, they entered the boss room.

On the throne centered against the back wall of the boss room, an imposing man sat placidly.

"You...Adelaire Princess, it seems you've finally come."

Rose glanced at the man with indifference even greater than his own. She looked him up and down with such a fierce gaze that it felt like she pierced his body and directly examined his soul.

"Disappointing," Rose muttered under her breath.

"You...! What the hell did you just call me?!" The man on the throne boomed.

Rose rolled her eyes and raised her voice. "I called you a fucking disappointment, deaf bastard. I can't believe someone as weak as you actually had the audacity to plot against me and my father."

"Bitch, you vanished for a few years and came back far too arrogant for your own good. Let me show you—!"

"What's with old people and their insistence on trying to prove their power to me? It's so damn pointless." Rose cut him off before his speech could crescendo.

"If you want to make a cool villain speech, then at least have the power to do so. Anyway, I have no time to waste on you. After you die, I can finally go see father again. So, goodbye!"

Rose clenched her fist. Space distorted around the throned man, crushing him into meat paste in an instant.

"Wow!" Ruyue whistled. "I knew you were head over heels, but to think you'd even imitate his attacks."

Elena nodded furiously in agreement. "Mm. I think we need to hold an intervention for our big sister. If things go on like this, she'll lose all her creativity. Her naming sense might even become as bad as Damien's."

"Gasp!" Ruyue gasped exaggeratedly. "Anything but that! It's been a while since you two have seen him fight, so you wouldn't know, but do you even understand how many different attacks and abilities he's named with the word 'void'? I think it's better if we name his abilities for him from now on."

Rose's eyes widened in realization. "It's not just the Void Physique, the Void Sword Art, and his last name anymore? When it was just three, it was acceptable, but more than that..."

Rose's eyes hardened as she spoke. "Alright, I accept your intervention. There's no way I'll allow my naming sense to deteriorate so much!"

Elena and Ruyue nodded in solidarity with her. As the three of them continued to talk and joke, they exited the now-destroyed hideout of the nameless organization.

"Hmm, we finished one, so Damien should've finished at least five by now, I think? Looking at the time, it's around time for us to meet at the palace." Elena said.

Rose nodded with an excited smile. "Good, good! Little sister Ruyue, it's finally time for you to meet both my father and Damien's mother! Let's go!"

Ruyue smiled in nervousness and excitement. While she fretted over how to act in front of Damien's mother, the three flew into the sky and began moving toward the capital of the Adelaire Empire.

With the destruction of the hideout they just raided, 1,322 traitors had been exterminated. And according to the estimate made by Damien, close to 250,000 remained.