

## Void 48

### Chapter 48

Another half a month passed as Damien moved to ponder the structure of his mana circuits.

Mana circuits were ethereal but still tethered to the body. If he wanted to design an intricate circuit, he needed to plan it well. Being interlinked with the body means that any small injury could disrupt his entire circuit.

It was the same idea as removing a small cog from a huge machine and causing its downfall.

To solve this problem, Damien decided to design his circuits in quadrants pertaining to specific areas of his body. This way, if his arm ended up getting severed, the overall system would only slightly weaken, rather than shutting down.

This was solely for the ethereal aspect of his mana circuits. The corporeal structure that he was creating was different and didn't possess the same flaw. It was essentially a new body part and would qualify to regenerate through his skill, so he didn't need to worry about it.

Damien had done many experiments over the past half a month on how he should structure the physical aspect of his circuits, and he had finally decided.

The mana core he had created would be placed in the center of his chest, essentially becoming a second heart, and he would form veins that scaled his entire body connecting to that heart. He also decided that a set of meridians were necessary to facilitate the flow and blockage of energy.

These would be smaller variants of his mana core that carried only a portion of its functions.

The creation of this corporeal system would be a long and grueling process, and he didn't even have enough mana to complete what he had now termed as his "mana heart" so he once again tried something new. Rather than devouring corpses, he targeted his skill at the atmospheric mana around him.

Surprisingly, it worked. He couldn't increase his mana capacity this way, but refilling his tank at a rapid pace was child's play.

Luckily, he would be able to move around fine during the process and wouldn't have to complete it all in one go. After all, his mana circuits wouldn't have negative effects on his internals even while they were incomplete, as their functionality would be null until he completed their ethereal counterpart.

The final thing he had to decide was the basis of his ethereal circuits. It would be most logical at this point for Damien to optimize them towards his spatial affinity, but he opted against that. He didn't want to be limited to just that much.

However, he couldn't make circuits that accepted everything, as it would limit his potential due to having too much freedom. Instead, he decided to keep it broad but not too expansive.

He wanted his mana circuits to focus on destructive power. He decided to block off all routes he had towards external healing and more positive powers. Naturally, this wouldn't disallow his own regeneration and similar skills, but he wouldn't be able to utilize such practices on others.

During the month that had passed since Damien began, Malcolm had visited weekly to track his progress. However, every time he came, Damien was deep in thought and didn't even notice his

presence. What surprised Malcolm was that Damien hadn't even started construction of his mana circuits yet.

For a genius like him, it should be easy, so Malcolm figured that Damien was aiming for something greater. He naturally supported this, but he hoped that Damien wouldn't try to do too much and end up failing.

There were only 4 months left until the Nexus Event officially began, so Malcolm once again decided to check on Damien. Reaching the mountain peak, he saw Damien standing up and playing with an amethyst marble.

This was the first time Malcolm had seen a change in Damien, so he was pleasantly surprised. Sensing something peculiar about the marble, Malcolm analyzed it, only to be shocked by what he found.

The marble was made up of pure crystallized mana, something he didn't expect to see from someone who was working on mana circuits. "Damien, what are you planning to do with that?"

Malcolm was a bit suspicious since that marble had the potential to be used as a bomb, but Damien's answer left him even more surprised.

"Hm? Ah, old man you're back. This is nothing, just a slight experiment I did while I was contemplating the mana circuits I'm going to make. I have the base idea down now. All I need to do is implement it."

Hearing this, Malcolm decided not to ask too many questions. Damien's choice was his alone, and as long as he didn't plan to use those mana beads as weapons, he didn't care.

“Alright then. You have 4 months left until the start of the event, so make sure not to waste too much time.”

Malcolm was about to leave once again when Damien stopped him. “Take me with you this time, old man. I’m going to take a little break before I start for real.”

Malcolm nodded. It wasn’t a bad thing to take rest every once in a while, especially during a big project like Damien’s.

Damien only felt his shoulder be grabbed before the wind started whooshing around him. The next thing he knew, he was back at the academy.

Bidding farewell to Malcolm, Damien headed back to his abode where he was once again greeted by Katherine. Since the last time they had met, she decided that she’d stay at his house. She claimed that the dorm she was staying in was too stuffy compared to it.

He would usually be against it, but he honestly doesn’t stay at the house much and Zara seemed to enjoy her company, so he agreed.

Speaking of Zara, she hadn’t been with Damien since he left for the mountain. He told her to stay home when he left and realizing that he’d be at the peak for a while, he told her to hunt and increase her strength. He’d only be back for a day, so he decided he wouldn’t disturb her training.

Once again, Damien plopped down on the couch as Katherine went to the kitchen to make food. If anyone else saw them, they’d think the two were dating, but the two of them were too oblivious to even make the connection.

“You could’ve told me that old man was the headmaster, you know. I mean, I guessed it easily but still.”

Katherine giggled in response. “Well, I thought it’d be more fun to surprise you. Oh yeah, did he take you as his student?”

Damien rolled his eyes. “Yeah, the old man is helping me fix some things that I was being stupid on. What about you? With your talent, there has to be an elder who wanted to teach you.”

Katherine smiled. “Yup! It was one of the Grand Elders too! Her name is Elder Monique and she specializes in illusion affinity as well. Hehe, I can’t wait to beat you up in the tournament.”

“Sure sure you’ll be the one beating me up. You have to be careful though, if you lose I might just have to spank your butt as punishment.” Damien replied with a sly smile.

“Shameless!” Katherine muttered as a rosy blush covered her face.

The two continued chatting as they ate dinner with each other. They were growing closer at an abnormal rate that would be weird by anyone’s standards. After all, the two have only had close relations for around 2 months.

However, it wasn’t surprising. Katherine was a sheltered girl with an adventurous personality that quickly got attached to anything she found interesting. As someone who didn’t have many close friends, she gravitated towards Damien often.

Damien was similar as well. And him being terrible at talking freely with anyone besides her, he also gravitated towards her. The two had a slight amount of co-dependence, but it wasn't unhealthy.

If two people only had each other in the same age range that they could freely speak to and were also extremely similar in their personalities, it'd be weirder if they didn't get close fast. But they were both dense as a lake, so neither had noticed this in the slightest.

Night soon fell and the two retired to their rooms. Damien, however, warped back to the mountain peak. It was relatively close so he didn't need to use too much mana.

Talking with Katherine for a few hours honestly made him much more refreshed than sleep did. He didn't know why that was but just assumed that it came from the synergy between like-minded people.

Spending a few hours to recover his mana, Damien ended up falling asleep. He woke up the next morning with a wide smile on his face.

'There are only 4 months left for the competition to start. If everything does as planned, it'll take 2 months to develop the corporeal system and 2 months to develop the ethereal one.'

Without waiting, Damien began the process. The first step was the mana heart. Just like he did previously, he gathered mana in a ball shape. Only, this time it was at the center of his chest, directly next to his heart.

This was a step Damien needed to take extra care with. He gently used his spatial affinity to compress the swirling ball of mana in his chest. As time passes, the ball became smaller and smaller, and at this time Damien started devouring the atmospheric mana.

Rather than a marble, he wanted his mana heart to be at least the size of a golf ball. The mana kept compressing as even more mana was added to it, creating a semi-liquified ball whose mass kept increasing.

He lost track of time and even of the functions of his body as his sole focus was compressing his mana heart. Mana roared and his body protested the foreign mass that had intruded on its structure, but Damien didn't care.

He had already run many simulations and figured out the perfect positioning for each piece of his new organ. The strain was only present due to the large portions of mana that were still being liquified.

Damien continued like this for an entire day and a half. Every time his mana capacity lowered, it was regenerated by the ambient mana he devoured, and this mana went directly into his mana heart.

By the end of the second day, Damien fell to the floor exhausted. His consciousness started fading due to the intense concentration and mana depletion he had felt over the past 2 days, but he held a wide smile on his face.

Within his chest, he could feel it. Although it didn't beat or pump anything, he could feel a second baseball-sized heart made entirely of mana, just waiting for him to give it function.