

Void 481

Chapter 481 Empress [1]

Achoo!

Damien turned to the side and sneezed suddenly. Rubbing his head, he sighed to himself. "Which bastard is badmouthing me? Tch."

He shook his head and continued walking at a steady pace. With every step he took, a pulse of World Force emanated from his body, flattening all the mobs crowding around him.

And without suspense, Damien arrived at the location of the strongest practitioner in the area. But, this was Apeiron, not the Cloud Plane. Strongest practitioner? Even he was just another dreg at the lower end of 3rd class.

To crush him, Damien didn't even need to move. A single look turned him into meatpaste.

Looking at the gory scene he caused, Damien nodded in satisfaction. "Mm, this is the fifth. Since the girls are taking care of that guy's hideout, it counts as 6. Haa, but there are still another 200,000ish traitors left. It'll be too annoying to do it alone."

Although Damien had only destroyed 5 locations, the numbers per gathering place differed greatly. Sometimes there would only be a few hundred in one area, while other times, thousands or tens of thousands of traitors came together. If it wasn't for the World Core's guidance, it would've been a pain choosing which places to prioritize.

But now wasn't the time to continue hunting. The current activities were just a warmup for him and the girls. Only after getting aid from the various empires of Apeiron would they truly begin.

'Hmm, speaking of empires...well, I'll let Father-in-law take care of that. For now, shall I pay a visit to the Beast Empress?'

Damien smiled lightly. Although they made an appointment to meet after the Nexus Event, he ended up completely forgetting it until just now.

'Well, I'm going to see her now so it should be fine, right?' He tried to comfort himself. But at the same time, he didn't know if the Beast Empress would treat him with the same familiarity when they met again.

The Beast Empress was a wolf. Damien didn't know which species she was exactly, but she was a pure-bred wolf with Royal level bloodline. And back then, even if he was the most impure variety, he was still essentially a wolf beastman.

But now, his wolf bloodline, along with all the other random impurities in his body, had long been purged. His current bloodline was...

'I have dragon blood running in my veins, but I don't feel like a dragon. Then there's the mysterious Demonic bloodline of unknown origins...well, the point is that I no longer have any relationship with the wolf species besides Zara. I might be welcomed with hostility.'

Regardless, he still needed to visit the Beast Empress. Steeling himself, Damien turned into a flash of light, disappearing and reappearing in a certain part of Helia Forest.

'Interesting...I didn't expect it to be so...modern.'

As Damien picked a location close to the Beast Empress when he teleported, he found himself in the midst of a bustling city filled with joyful cries.

Beastmen who walked on two legs, beasts that walked on four, even those who flew through the air, they perused the streets and lived with a level of society that one wouldn't expect from a beast.

But since Damien had been to the 3000 Beast Mountain Range, he wasn't too surprised. Instead, he took his time and walked the streets of the city.

'I don't know anything here. Even with the Universal Language, I can barely understand what they're saying.'

It wasn't that he didn't understand their words, it was just that the terminology used wasn't what he was used to. But as he walked the streets for a few hours, he slowly became acclimated to the environment.

"Old man, give me a few kebabs." He called out to a nearby shop vendor. He still had plenty of gold left to rot in his subspace, so money wasn't an issue at all.

Taking the kebab from the old man and paying with an entire gold coin, almost giving the old man a heart attack, Damien continued his casual walk down the street.

Little beastmen and beast children scurried through the streets playing games, the adults worked diligently in their establishments, creating such a harmonious atmosphere that it made Damien feel uncomfortable.

"Unexpected, isn't it? When one thinks of beasts, one usually believes us to be savage and uncouth. Seeing this type of scene, has your opinion changed?" A silvery voice rang out from behind him, immediately capturing his attention.

Damien smiled without turning around and replied. "Perhaps for anyone else, this scene would bring an immense amount of culture shock. But you'd be surprised at how normal this is for me now."

"Really, now? You truly know how to make me curious about you. What, don't tell me you're planning to court me?"

Damien's brow piqued in interest. "Do I look like the kind of man to chase after a married woman? Please don't devalue me like that, Milady Beast Empress."

Damien turned around and faced the stunning beauty that had been following him around for a while.

Her long silver hair flowed down her back and framed her face, her piercing red eyes looked incredibly alluring. When it came to bust and hip size, the Beast Empress was really second to none.

Combined with that mature charm she emanated with every movement, her appearance was truly enough to kill a man.

But even with how stunning she looked, only Damien took note of her presence. Or rather, he was the only one with the ability to do so.

The Beast Empress smiled slyly at his words. "Oho? But shouldn't you already know by now, Mr. Star Master? This little girl is pure and unsullied."

Damien rolled his eyes. "Even so, I don't think the Beast Emperor particularly enjoys green hats. Wouldn't his pride be damaged regardless of whether your marriage is fake or real?"

The Beast Empress shrugged. "Why should I care what that geezer thinks? My life is my own. The only reason I became the Empress is because my bloodline purity is far higher than even his."

"Haa, dear Empress, do you really feel so much satisfaction in teasing me? It seems you've strayed the topic so far away from where it was originally that it'll be hard to get back." Damien sighed and shook his head.

"Hmph, can't this little girl have a bit of fun? Playing the Empress role all day is so boring!"

"But, are we acquainted enough for you to act so causally around me? Last I checked, we've only met once, and that was an official setting where I was far too weak for us to converse properly."

"Mm, and in the short few years that you were away, you've become a man that has the qualifications to compete for my heart. Don't you feel it? The pull of our bloodlines, I mean."

Damien's gaze sharpened. He didn't know why, but he was indeed feeling a strange pull ever since he met the Beast Empress. It was as if something within him desperately wanted to get close to her.

"But it's quite strange, don't you think?" He muttered just loud enough for the Beast Empress to hear.

"This so-called bloodline pull...how is it affecting me even though I no longer have any wolf bloodline within me?"

Damien stared at the Beast Empress with cold eyes. His aura flared, causing a mountain of pressure to descend upon the Beast Empress.

If it wasn't for her strength as a 4th class being, she would've fallen to her knees in an instant.

"I learned quite an interesting thing from Old Bai a while back. Dragon Pressure isn't something that can be avoided through strength alone. Say, how does it feel?"

The Beast Empress looked up into Damien's eyes and spoke through ragged breaths.
"It...feels...amazing...!"

Her face flushed red, her breathing becoming more and more shallow. Seeing her expression shifting further into ecstasy with every second he kept his Dragon Pressure active, Damien immediately canceled the ability.

The Beast Empress plopped down onto the floor and caught her breath, a trail of clear liquid leaking from the space between her legs. She didn't even try to hide the evident disappointment in her eyes.

"Silly boy, how can you be so naive? To others, Dragon Pressure is a terrifying thing that strikes fear into the depths of their souls. However, to members of the opposite sex who possess even an ounce of Dragon Bloodline, it is an extremely powerful aphrodisiac." The Beast Empress licked her lips seductively as she spoke.

Damien cringed at her words. 'No wonder...that old bastard was smiling so evilly when he taught me how to use Dragon Pressure...so it was because of this!'

But even though he now knew, he couldn't take back his actions. Besides, it was his own fault for not realizing something so obvious.

Just like how peacocks strutted their feathers to attract a mate, dragons could entice female members of the species through their pressure. Dragon Pressure was a symbol of a dragon's pride.

And now, Damien had effectively subdued the Beast Empress using this pride. Looking at the wet and panting woman on the floor in front of him, Damien really couldn't tell whether it was a good or bad thing.

'Damn, my troubles have increased yet again.'

Chapter 482 Empress [2]

"Whatever, let's just end this here and pretend it never happened. Get up off the floor so we can start talking about important matters."

Damien held his hand out to the Beast Empress, who stared at it in suspicion. Moments later, she furiously shook her head.

"Do you think I'm in any state to walk at the moment? If you didn't know, you cut this Empress off at the edge of a climax, and my legs no longer wish to listen to my commands."

Damien sighed in exasperation. "Then, what do you want me to do?"

"Carry me!"

The Beast Empress' response was instant. Her eyes gleamed with a child-like enthusiasm. Damien rubbed his forehead, not sure about what to do in this situation.

'If I indulge her, things are bound to become more troublesome in the future. Yet, if I don't carry her, I'll never get my work done.'

Realizing that he didn't have another choice, Damien turned around and squatted. "Get on my back. This is the most I'll do for you."

The Beast Empress smiled happily and mounted him, slinging her arms around his neck and curling her legs around his waist. As she did so, Damien grabbed hold of her luscious thighs to support her weight.

"Ah~!" The Beast Empress let out a moan of surprise. Hearing it, Damien's brow began to twitch.

"Don't make needless sounds or I'll drop you on the side of the street and leave." He declared coldly.

The Beast Empress simply smiled and shut her mouth, resting her chin on his shoulder and enjoying the new experience she was having.

"So anyway," Damien started. "The reason I came here today was to request your help. War is fast approaching, and we need to eliminate the roots the Nox have planted in our Sector before it's too late. But the number of enemies is far too many for me to handle alone. I hope the Beast Domain will comply with my request."

The Beast Empress turned to look at Damien's face, finding her lips brushing against his cheek as she did so.

But she hid the blush that crept up her cheeks. Their current conversation was one she needed to have as the Empress, rather than as a woman.

"Naturally, when it comes to the Nox, the Beast Domain has no problems lending its power. But the decision doesn't lie only with me. You'll need to convince that old geezer as well."

Damien shook his head with a grin. "No, I only need permission from you. I guess I forgot to mention it, but starting tomorrow, the Beast Domain will only have an Empress."

The Beast Empress' eyes widened in shock. "You don't mean..."

"It's probably what you're thinking. I'm not sure how that old bastard got into contact with them, but it doesn't change the fact that he did."

"Haa, that old thing has always been greedy for power, so it doesn't surprise me. It's a shame though. He was quite a good ruler, discounting his betrayal."

Damien smiled wryly. If he betrayed his people, was he still a good ruler? But as he walked through the streets, he couldn't deny the Beast Empress' words.

The people living under the Emperor's rule were happy. None the wiser to his deal with the devil, they lived in peace and prosperity. Perhaps the Emperor was greedy for power, but he wasn't one to mistreat those under his rule.

'What a troublesome grey area. But, it isn't my job to fret over those things. I kill who needs to be killed and leave the rest for later. That's always been my style.'

Yet, despite his thoughts, Damien found himself wavering. He was still going to kill the Beast Emperor, there was no doubt about that, but he felt guilty for the citizens who would mourn his death.

"Let's walk around for a bit longer. I still have around a day before I need to go to the Adelaire Empire."

The Beast Empress smiled softly. "Mm, let's do that, then. Also, while we're alone, call me Alea. Beast Empress is too rigid."

"Your name is Alea?" Damien asked stupidly.

"Why? Is it that strange?" Ales retorted.

Damien shook his head with a smile. "No, it's just far more normal than I expected it to be. Well then, Miss Alea, would you like to go on a date with me?"

Alea smiled happily and gave him a light peck on the cheek. "What a bold little boy you are. Nobody has ever dared to ask this Empress on something like a date before."

"If you want to tell me this is your first date ever, you don't have to talk in circles. Fine, then. I'll give you a great date to commemorate our friendship, so be prepared."

Alea frowned slightly at the word "friendship," but didn't say anything. Instead, she focused on the date that Damien was taking her on.

Sadly, he didn't know much about the Beast Domain. He was forced to improvise when it came to locations.

But who was better at scouting locations than a spatial expert?

Whether it be the sandy beaches of the continent, the beautiful view from the highest peak in the world, or even the view of the world itself from the starry sky above, Damien allowed Alea to witness it all.

Their date lasted until the sun set as the two adventured through Apeiron. They spent the day like a pair of young lovers who knew nothing but each other.

But like all good things, their day had to come to an end at some point.

Damien and Alea sat on an indiscreet hilltop in Helia Forest and gazed at the sky above quietly. And ignoring Damien's constant refusal, Alea cuddled up to him as they sat, disallowing him from escaping her grasp.

At this point, Damien already gave up on convincing her. It was better for him to simply turn his brain off and enjoy the little adventure they went on.

"So, now that it's over, are you satisfied?" He asked lightly.

Alea looked over at him carefully. "Satisfied? I can't say I'm completely satisfied. But somehow, I am over the moon with joy. It's such a strange feeling."

"Why aren't you satisfied, then? Did you not get everything you wished for?"

"Even receiving the universe as a whole seems more possible than getting what I truly want," Alea responded, her gaze carrying a hint of sadness.

Damien looked down at her curiously. "I don't understand, though. Why? How can you be so certain about what you desire?"

"Does there need to be a particular reason? Did you have a reason when you and that princess fell in love?"

Damien didn't answer. Or rather, he couldn't. His love for Rose came naturally after spending a great deal of time with her, but was there any reason behind it?

There wasn't. He somehow fell in love without even realizing it.

So how could he discount what Alea was feeling without understanding her?

"But even then, I'm afraid it isn't possible at the moment. I can't afford to be distracted."

Alea cringed. Although she expected rejection from the beginning, she didn't expect it to be so harsh. But even then, she couldn't stop herself from smiling.

"It's situational, then? That means I'll have plenty of chances in the future."

Damien once again withheld his response. He truly didn't know what to say to this woman, nor did he understand how they ended up like this.

He couldn't help but feel suspicious of the Beast Empress. The impression she gave off was far different from the one he got when he first met her. But from her spiritual intent, Damien could clearly see that she wasn't possessed.

Whether there was an ulterior motive behind her actions or if she was just a fool, Damien didn't know. His curiosity nudged him to find out, but his rationality wholeheartedly disagreed.

'What a strange situation.' Damien sighed inwardly. But no matter how he tried to convince himself, he couldn't change his own mind.

Now wasn't the time for this kind of thing. He had yet to settle matters with Elena, he had yet to finish preparing for war, there was no time for him at all.

Even if it was harsh, and even if his meaning was misinterpreted, he wasn't lying when he said he couldn't afford any distractions.

And with that thought in mind, Damien parted ways from the Beast Empress. He didn't dare look back. He feared the expression he might see on her face would be one that would make him waver.

That night, quietly within the Imperial Palace of the Beast Domain, the Beast Emperor met his end.

No matter how hard those under his rule investigated, they couldn't find any trace of the murderer. The only clue they had was the faint Dragon Pressure that lingered in the air.

As for the Beast Empress, she vanished without a trace on the same night. The only thing she left was a note to her vassals, crowning a new Empress for the Beast Domain.

It was an unconscious change. Damien would've never thought him satisfying his own vanity by taking the Beast Empress on a date would have such a profound impact on the world.

But that was a story for another time.

For now, Damien made his way to the Adeliare Empire to finally reunite with his only remaining family in this world.

Chapter 483 Visits [1]

The Adelaide Empire was thrown into a festive mood with no prior warning at all. The hidden organizations that threatened the empire's peace disappeared one after another, the Emperor began moving against the corrupt nobles, and last but certainly not least, their beloved princess finally returned.

For 3 days and 3 nights, a mighty celebration took place. The streets of every town in the Empire were lined with people, slinging decorations and enjoying themselves at street stalls.

Even the Empire's soldiers were mobilized to maintain peace in the entire empire and allow all its citizens to celebrate. Some doubted whether the Emperor was becoming senile in old age, throwing such a grand celebration, but even they were soon caught up in the jovial atmosphere, joining the bustling crowds.

Within the Imperial Palace, a scene completely different from the festivities outside was taking place.

The Adelaide Emperor dodged rapidly as he was attacked, fear and panic evident on his face. But even as his body moved, the endless barrage of attacks never seemed to stray too far away from him.

"Calm down! Why must you attack me like this?!" He questioned indignantly as he dodged a projectile that flew past his face.

A pink-haired beauty stood across the room from him and seethed in embarrassment. Without answering his question, she picked up another pillow and heavily threw it at the Emperor.

"You...did you really have to embarrass me like that?!" Rose finally screamed. Her face was bright red, to the point where she looked like she would explode at any second.

She didn't expect to be welcomed back to the Empire with such cringe-worthy grandeur. She was just planning to show Ruyue around the Empire when she was swarmed by a crowd of common people praising and welcoming her.

And it wasn't just a single town. Regardless of where she went, the reaction was the same. It was only after beating up a few Imperial Knights that she received her answer.

Feeling the fluctuations from Damien's Warp Gate, the Emperor immediately moved his people into action.

And when she learned the truth, she rushed to the Imperial Palace, causing the scene that was currently taking place.

Sitting to the side and watching the antics of the father-daughter pair was a woman who looked no older than 25, but the wise light in her eyes and her general bearing seemed to suggest otherwise.

When Rose noticed her, she rushed into her arms and pouted. "Auntie! Tell father he went too far!"

Claire looked down at her daughter-in-law with a soft smile. Even though her behavior was extremely childish at the moment, Claire couldn't really blame her. In this kind of situation, who wouldn't throw a tantrum?

Claire brushed her hands through Rose's hair as she spoke. "Now, now. Can't you tell how much your father missed you? Though, I have to agree that he went a bit overboard this time."

"Keuk...! You too, Claire?!" The Adelaire Emperor exclaimed, gripping his heart in mock pain.

"Not only my daughter, but my close friend as well...I've been betrayed by everyone!"

Rose rolled her eyes. "Stupid dad, since when did you act like this? Where's the cold and indifferent Adelaire Emperor I know?"

Claire giggled at the question. "The truth is, once you left he finally noticed how much he missed you. Ever since then, he became a complete daughter's fool."

Rose's eyes widened in shock. And conveniently, Elena and Ruyue entered the room at the very same moment.

A collection of giggles and laughter rang out from the group of women. Suddenly, the Adelaire Emperor felt a bit left out.

"Sheesh, where did my son-in-law disappear to at a time like this? It's too uncomfortable being alone in this scary place..."

'Not to mention, I have to beat that bastard's ass. How dare he form a harem when he already has my daughter?! Hmph, brat, you better not show your face here.'

While the Adelaide Emperor seethed, Ruyue knelt on the floor in front of Claire, lowering her head to the floor in a kowtow.

"This unworthy daughter-in-law greets mother." She said with utmost seriousness. Her whole body was practically shivering in nervousness.

Claire looked down at the kowtowing Ruyue curiously. Truth be told, she knew her son wouldn't stay monogamous from the second she woke up and saw him with both Rose and Elena. But seeing Ruyue here was even more of a shock to her.

How long had it been since he left? One or two years? In that time, not only did he finally accept Elena's feelings, he also completely conquered the heart of another young woman?

Unknowingly, Claire's lips curled up into a smirk. An unknown feeling of pride bubbled up in her heart.

'My son sure is a capable man now.' She thought to herself. At the same time, she bent down and lifted Ruyue off the floor.

"Why are you being so stiff?" She asked gently, grabbing hold of Ruyue's hands. "From now on, we are family. There's no need for such things between family, right?"

Ruyue's eyes widened. She didn't know how to respond. After all, the family she knew was nothing like that. That family was a toxic place full of hate and jealousy. Let alone love, there wasn't even camaraderie between family members.

Perhaps that was the reason why the Xue Clan fell so easily.

Ruyue nodded her head lightly. She didn't want to remember the Xue Clan as her family any longer.

This new family would be her one and only, and she would cherish it with everything she had.

On the border of the Adelaire Empire, a man appeared in the air. From his gait alone one could tell he was an expert.

His gaze drifted across the horizon, taking note of the cities he saw below him. In the end, his eyes landed on a single place.

A medium-sized city by the name of Archdale.

A small smile spread on his lips. His figure flashed, appearing in Archdale completely unnoticed.

He perused the streets quietly, embracing the joyous atmosphere that enveloped them. And imagining the look of embarrassment on Rose's face when she saw what was happening, his smile inadvertently grew wider.

As he aimlessly drifted through the city, he found himself in front of an old decrepit building. But despite the immense heat leaking from within, the building didn't seem stressed at all.

Damien walked through the door of the shop, taking a moment to admire the weapons on the walls before directly jumping over the counter and walking into the back room.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

The sound of a hammer clashing against metal immediately filled his ears. A familiar heat enveloped his body. Despite the fact that he had only been here a few times, it felt oddly homey.

He walked through the halls of the forge, quickly arriving at the main furnace where a certain blacksmith was hard at work.

And then, he simply observed.

The minute movements the blacksmith made while hammering the metal, the precision and accuracy of each swing in both the position and amount of power put into every swing.

The way the flames danced as they melted metals and formed alloys, the way black smoke rose from the furnace to create a dreary cloud above, it all melded together like a piece of art.

Despite how rough the scene itself was, it somehow gave off an air of grace.

With neither of them realizing the flow of time, the forging was completed, a large and domineering hammer appearing as the final product.

The blacksmith finally turned around to acknowledge the new visitor in his shop. "Aye, business ain't boomin' like it used to these days! So, customer, what can I get for ya?"

Vormec flashed a toothy, seemingly professional grin, and turned around. When he saw who was behind him, his eyes widened in shock.

Chapter 484 Visits[2]

"Old ghost, it seems every time I visit you I see this same reaction. At some point, you have to stop being shocked, right?"

Vormec reined in his shock and grunted. "Tch, it's just you. I thought I was gonna welcome some big shot customer, but it's just a brat who came to leech."

Damien rolled his eyes. "It's too late for this kind of act. What, did you miss me so much you couldn't express yourself properly? I'm sorry, but I'm a married man. I can't accept your feelings." He said with mock sympathy coloring his face.

Damien dodged to the left, avoiding the hammer that was just forged. "Tsk tsk, even if you're angry that I rejected you, you can't just mistreat precious artifacts like this. Old ghost, I'm heartbroken seeing how low you've fallen."

Vormec's face went red in anger, but he couldn't retort at all. Seeing this, Damien grinned.

Vormec was terrible with word games, and last time they met, Damien was too. But after spending so much time with those Cloud Plane cultivators who loved to spout bullshit even in the middle of life-or-death battles, he picked up a few tricks.

"Little demon, you never come around these parts if you don't want something from me. Come on, spit it out. How badly did you fuck the sword I made this time?"

Damien found a nearby chair and sat down. Straightening his posture, he intertwined his fingers and stared at Vormec seriously.

"W-what? It can't be that bad!" Vormec stuttered seeing Damien's change of pace.

Damien continued to stare at Vormec with utmost seriousness. His gaze was so hard it could break bricks like butter.

"It's gone."

"Gone?"

"Shattered."

"Shattered?"

"Destroyed completely. Not even scraps are left of it."

"You..."

"And I did it to myself. The sword couldn't handle my power and broke."

Vormec almost passed out on the spot.

Damien grinned sheepishly. "Well, I got a better sword not long after so...no harm no foul?"

Something snapped in Vornec's head. He rushed over to Damien and tightly gripped his shoulders, heavily shaking him back and forth.

"Better sword?! No harm no foul? Brat, that was my life's greatest achievement! And you broke it just like that?! That precious sword?! It was a growth-type artifact! A GROWTH-TYPE ARTIFACT! Even when you become a Demigod, you'll still be able to use it perfectly! Yet...not only did you break it, but you did it with YOUR OWN ATTACK?!" Vormec yelled in frustration.

"I got a better sword, though." Damien smiled sheepishly and muttered under his breath.

Vormec's head was about to legitimately explode from rage. In the end, he was forced to leave the room to calm himself down.

"AGGGHHH, YOU BASTARD! WHEN I SEE YOUR FACE I WANNA BEAT YOU, BUT I AIN'T GOT ANY COMBAT SKILLS! BASTARDDD!" A muffled roar came from beyond the door of the side room.

A few minutes after the roar, Vormec returned as if nothing happened. "Brat, since you're already here, lemme see that new sword of yours."

Damien rolled his eyes at the shameless old man. After all, he knew this would happen. It was the reason he mentioned the new sword at all.

Because the second Vormec's brain registered those two words, all his anger would vanish, replaced by his unending curiosity as a blacksmith.

'My genius plan succeeds!' Damien praised himself inwardly as he swiped his hand through the air.

"This sword is called Mirage. He's become a good partner of mine."

Mirage appeared in the air, vibrating excitedly. It flew in circles around Damien's head like a pet that missed its owner.

Damien grabbed the sword hilt with a smile. "Did you really miss me that much?"

Bzzz!

Mirage shook rapidly. Damien felt like he could practically hear the sword's cries of affirmation. And when he did, his smile widened. He clutched the sword hilt tighter.

"Tsk ts, what a bothersome sword."

Meanwhile, Vormec stared at Mirage hungrily, like a greedy lion staring down its prey.

Mirage shook in fear when it sensed his gaze. Damien also looked over in disgust.

"Old ghost, get your dirty gaze off my baby. I'll kill you for real."

Vormec snapped out of his trance and rubbed his head sheepishly. "The usual thing?" He asked hopefully.

Damien nodded in response. This old man was a benefactor of his, so he didn't mind entertaining him.

The two were soon transported to the same old plain where Damien had been countless times before. However, in the past few years, the battle scars that accumulated here were slowly beginning to fade away.

'Well, it's not too late to add a new one.'

Damien took his stance with Mirage in hand. He concentrated on the blade, pouring everything into it. And then, he let loose a vertical slash.

'Void Sword Art Fifth Form: Dimensional Severance.'

The thin black line of Dimensional Severance razed the plain ahead. With Damien's spatial abilities combined with Mirage's spatial amplification, the attack was truly terrifying.

And seeing it, Vormec sighed in stupefaction as well. He shook his head in remorse.

"It's a shame. My skill only works on swords I crafted myself. If I could get a look at that sword, my skills would improve by leaps and bounds!"

Damien smiled wryly as well. He knew from the beginning that there was no point in coming out here. The two of them were just reminiscing on old memories.

And they did so for many hours to come. It was only when night fell that Damien finally left Vormec's workshop.

'I didn't really have any connections at the Adventurer's Guild, so there's no need to visit there...should I just go straight to the palace?'

There were a few more places he wanted to visit. Namely, the Zenith Academy where Malcolm was, and the Beast Domain once again.

Actually, Damien's first visit to the Beast Domain was immensely shortened. His original plan was to visit Ethan during that time, and discuss the purge plan with the rulers of the area, but his sudden meeting with the Beast Empress totally derailed his plans.

In the end, he had the White Dragon King and Elvira quickly kill the Beast Emperor and then he ran away. He didn't want to stay with Alea any longer, lest he got further attracted to her.

'Troublesome matters are everywhere. Right, let's ignore everything and focus on my reunion with mom now. Everything else can be solved in due time.'

Damien's figure flashed away from Archdale, appearing in Aurora in the next instant. The second he did...

Waves of people congregated at his location. Rabid screams and yells filled the vicinity, threatening to make Damien's ears bleed.

As for what the rabid crowd was screaming...?

"Son-in-law!"

"It's the Emperor's son-in-law!"

"Princess Rose's husband! He's really here!"

"Kyaaa~! He's so handsome!"

"Son-in-law! If you ever feel bored of the princess, you can take me any time!"

"Hey! Who said that? The princess' husband belongs to me!"

"No me!"

"Guys, he's too amazing for us to monopolize him! We should form his great worldwide harem!"

""Yeahhh!""

Damien stood frozen in shock. The women were the loudest, but there were a great deal of men within their ranks as well. And hearing the occasional sausage within the field of flowers didn't sit right with Damien at all.

His expression went cold. Formless World Force spread from his body in the form of Awareness, accurately pinpointing James Adelaire's location.

And once he locked on, Damien's figure disappeared instantaneously.

'Damn Father-in-law! If I don't beat you today, I'm not a man!"

Chapter 485 Visits [3]

"You...damn...FATHER-IN-LAW!"

Damien's figure crashed through the wall of the Imperial Palace, barreling towards the Adelaire Empire with Mirage already mid-swing.

The second his body entered the room, Damien let off a crescent moon-shaped space blade.

The Adelaire Emperor looked up at Damien's falling figure and grinned. "Good! I've been wanting to beat your ass too!"

He waved his hand, easily dispersing Damien's space blade. At the same time, his figure was wrapped in light green mana.

Whoosh!

The Emperor narrowed the distance so fast it looked like he teleported. His fist flew forward with turbulent mana coating it.

Damien gritted his teeth and tightened his grip on Mirage, bringing it forward and using it to block the punch.

SCREEEECH!

As the fist ground against the sword blade in a bid for territory, a screeching howl rang out from the collision. But more surprising than the sound was the fact that Damien was able to hold out against the Emperor's momentum.

"If there's one thing I can be confident in...it's my physical stats!"

Damien's arms bulged as he pushed as much power as he could. Mana furiously swirled around his limbs and enhanced them.

Vector control subtly activated in the background, exponentially multiplying the weight of Damien's sword.

And as the push of strength slowly whittled away at the Emperor's resistance, Damien added a final touch of spatial mana to the equation.

'Void Sword Art Fourth Form: Spatial Collapse'

Mirage broke through the Emperor's defenses, but was unable to cut its target, the Emperor narrowly dodged before it could. However, there was no way for him to dodge the following attack.

Space shattered around Damien and the Emperor, folding in on itself and fusing into strange patterns. Damien and the Emperor were pulled into the void beyond the space crack.

"Hahaha! Kid, you've improved drastically since the last time we fought!" The Adelaire Emperor laughed rambunctiously.

Damien rolled his eyes. "This is nothing. Watch how I beat your ass now that we've entered my home territory."

'Mirror Domain'

The void shattered into countless glass fragments that floated through the air. The concepts of distance and position seemed to disappear entirely,

And because Damien activated his domain in the void space that was filled with blackness that already dulled the senses, its effects were exponentially increased.

The Emperor frowned as he looked around him. For some reason, he felt like he couldn't move a single step even though his movements hadn't been physically constrained.

"What'd you do?" He asked curiously. His awareness spread through the area as he tried to understand the situation.

But even that was a daunting task. The glass-like shards of space that floated through the domain were all small ruptures of their own. The second the Emperor's awareness entered that rupture, it'd be displaced and destroyed in an instant.

The only way to navigate through the thousands upon thousands of mirror fragments was to take a decent amount of time and concentration to weave awareness through the space and understand it.

But mid-battle, was that an option?

Damien's figure flashed from place to place within the boundaries of the mirror realm multiple times every second. His movement was completely unrestrained.

And at a certain point, mirage phantoms of Damien began appearing in space.

"This?" Damien finally responded to the Emperor's question. "This is just a little incomplete trick of mine."

He waved his hand, the phantom Damiens following his motion. Space was thrown into complete chaos.

The floating mirror fragments shot forward like ice shards as they targeted the Emperor. Countless spatial blades and attacks from Bladeless followed suit.

The Emperor was completely surrounded before he even had the opportunity to fight. Although none of these attacks would kill him, it didn't change the fact that he'd be the first injured.

"Haa, fine! I lose." He declared sullenly.

Damien grinned and waved his arm, canceling the wave of attacks. The Mirror Domain vanished soon after. And once the domain that was preventing space from repairing itself vanished, space melded back together as well, dropping Damien and the Emperor back in the room where the girls were waiting.

"What'd you think, father-in-law? Pretty good, right?" Damien bragged shamelessly.

The Adelaide Emperor clicked his tongue. "It was luck this time. Plus, even if the attack landed, it wouldn't have hurt me."

"Tsk tsk," Damien replied scornfully. "Who knew the Adelaide Emperor was such a sore loser."

"Who are you calling a sore loser? I simply went easy on you because you are my daughter's precious husband. What, you didn't like the gift I prepared?"

"Tch, we aren't even near the sea, yet you somehow still manage to be so damn salty."

"Damn brat!"

"Stupid old geezer!"

The two turned their heads away at the same time, causing the women in the room to burst into a fit of giggles. Hearing them, Damien finally turned his attention away from the Emperor.

A genuine smile formed on his face.

"Mom." He called out. Walking over to the woman standing at the side, he gave her a warm hug."

"I'm glad you're doing well," Claire responded with an equally warm smile. A shadow of tears formed in the corner of her eye.

She wasn't just greeting Damien casually. She truly meant her words with all her heart.

The dreams never stopped.

Whenever she worried about Damien's safety, she'd have another terrifying dream. Even though she didn't know exactly what he went through, she knew enough.

And she hated that her son lived a lifestyle which could kill him at any moment.

But she didn't have the right to stop him. Due to being comatose from Mana Sickness during the most important years of Damien's life, she lost the right to scold him and influence his path.

The only thing she could do for her son was stay safe. Stay safe and keep a comfortable home ready for him whenever he was in the need of a place to stay.

That was her duty as a parent.

And it was also the reason why she was doing so poorly at trying to control her tears. They flowed freely like a river, staining Damien's robes in the process.

Damien smiled wryly. "What are you crying about, mom? Isn't this a happy occasion?"

Claire nodded and wiped her tears. "You're right. Of course this is a happy occasion. Don't you know how to tell tears of joy apart from those of sadness?"

Claire flicked Damien's forehead jokingly as she spoke, lightening up the atmosphere that was just beginning to stall.

"Come," she proclaimed. "Let's head to the main hall. The servants have prepared a great feast for us!"

The group changed locations, laughing and chattering the entire way. Once they arrived, they were truly treated to a feast for kings. There was an unimaginable amount of food, but more unimaginable was the speed at which Damien consumed it.

The night was spent warmly as Damien and the girls shared their stories about the Cloud Plane. The exciting stories filled with impossible sights held an unspeakable allure to both Claire and James.

And by the time the festivities ended, the 3-day duration of the grand celebration came to an end as well. Dawn arrived on a new day in Apeiron, with everyone finally returning to their daily lives.

As for Damien, he was currently in the throne room of the Imperial Palace, having a private meeting with the Adelaire Emperor.

Chapter 486 Visits [4]

"So as I've said, this is how I plan to proceed from here. Although 5 months doesn't seem like a considerable amount of time, with the combined effort of everyone, it might even be a lax deadline."

Damien gave the Adelaire Emperor the same spiel he gave to the Beast Empress and everyone else he asked for help. As he did so, he outlined the situation on the Cloud Plane and the information he held on the wider universe, catching the Emperor's attention.

"I don't think anyone would have a reason to refuse your proposal. Even if most who live in this era didn't experience the previous war, the stories of that tragedy are engraved in their bones. I have no doubt that our knights will be willing to assist you."

Damien nodded in agreement. "I figured the same. Since that's settled, the biggest issues are out of the way. Now onto the more troublesome matters..."

Damien pulled out a pile of paper and used his mana to engrave writing onto each page. Once he was finished, he passed the stack over to the emperor.

"This is the list of names and their exact locations. If there are any major changes, the World Core will update me so I can relay the information to you. As for that matter...I'll let you deal with it at your own discretion. What's truly troublesome, though, is..."

"This location." The Adelaire Emperor muttered.

"Right. Deep within the Endless Sea, there is another civilization. Half of the traitors on Apeiron come from that continent. I will go there personally to deal with it, since there isn't anyone else who can travel that distance easily."

The Adelaire Emperor nodded his head sternly. "Then, we shall move as you say. I will contact the other two emperors and the Elf Queen in your stead. By the time you return from your trip overseas, the matters of our continent will be solved."

Damien voiced his acknowledgment. This was exactly how he wanted things to go. At this speed, he could easily finish up on Apeiron and head to Earth far sooner than he expected.

His meeting with the Adelaire Empire soon adjourned. Without much thought, he returned to his room.

"You...what the hell are you three doing?"

His eyes widened in shock when he stepped through the door. His three women were laying on the bed, waiting for him to arrive.

"Hm? What's wrong? You've never seen wives greet their husband when he returns home?" Rose questioned slyly.

Ruyue joined in with the same evil look on her face. "That's right, that's right. Especially when our husband is such a philanderer, us poor lonely wives must work extra hard to get his attention."

Elena nodded without a change of expression. "I agree too."

Damien rolled his eyes and smiled wryly. He really didn't know what to say to them. Instead, he simply accepted the situation as is.

"Fine, since my wives worked so hard to get my attention, it's only natural that I reward them, right?"

His clothes besides his underwear disappeared into his subspace as he jumped onto the bed. His arms spread wide, catching all three women in his grasp.

With Rose and Elena on his left and Ruyue on his right, Damien submerged himself into the pillowy warmth of their bodies and the bed below.

"Ahh, this is the life." He muttered in satisfaction. His hands carelessly moved across the soft bodies in his grasp, enjoying the feel of their skin on his.

Unfortunately, none of his ladies were in the mood to share him, so he wasn't able to take it further than that. But he was satisfied nonetheless. He could do far more damage with his hands than the girls ever expected.

And by the time the sun rose on the horizon, all three were red and panting, unable to move from the bed or endure the shame of what transpired the previous night.

As for Damien, he exited the room with a foolish grin on his face. He almost couldn't stop himself from yelling in triumph.

'What a night, what a night. Although harems are filled with troubles, they're also filled with heavenly bliss. Mm, I've been enlightened today. Amitabha.'

He achieved Sainthood through his hand techniques. The heavenly moans that still resounded in his head were like church bells praising his ascension.

'Let's deal with that troublesome continent while I'm in a good mood. I feel like my work efficiency will double with the amount of energy I have now.'

Thinking such useless thoughts, Damien finally ended his walk through the palace.

Since all the important parties had already been notified of his departure, he didn't need to stop anywhere before he left for the unexplored continent.

'Let's see if you can hold your promises. I'm excited to see how much the three of you will grow while I'm away.'

And with that final thought, he vanished from the palace halls.

Tens of thousands of kilometers away from the main continent of Apeiron, there was another land undiscovered by those on the mainland. It was a strange land divided into two sections, one green and the other black.

When Damien reappeared, he was standing at the dividing point between these two sections. Below him, a fierce battle was taking place.

"Prea! How dare you betray our race?! How dare you follow the scum who forced us into this terrible isolation?!" A woman with ashen-grey skin shouted at another woman who she was fighting. The twin daggers in her hands swept through the air, slashing the one called Prea's face.

"Ack!" Prea groaned in pain. Spitting out the blood in her mouth, she responded in an equally furious tone.

"Betray?! This is to save our people! There is no way for us to escape this continent if we do not follow their will!"

"That is just an excuse! You know they will only betray you when your use runs out! Stop deluding yourself!"

The two women fought furiously on the battlefield. The two sides of the conflict were divided just as colorfully as the continent itself.

On one side, a tribe of Dark Elves, and on the other, the more common race of Forest Elves.

Damien raised his brow as he watched them. 'From the color scheme alone, you'd think that the Dark Elves are the traitors. Reality like the universe is screaming about how stupid that is.'

The Forest Elves usually had pristine white skin without blemishes, but this particular group was different. Their faces and bodies were marred with gruesome black scars, evidently backlash from intaking Nox mana.

'Forest Elves are inherently close to nature and life. It's only natural that they face repercussions when they try to internalize mana of the directly opposing nature.'

Damien shook his head at their stupidity. 'In hopes of leaving this continent, they made deals with the devil. All they had to do was grow their own power until they could leave by themselves, but they took the easy way out.'

As the Star Master, Damien could naturally feel the suppressive force in the sky that prevented those under it from flying too high, but the level of this suppression wasn't at a level that a 4th class couldn't break.

Perhaps it was impenetrable in the past, but ten thousand years was enough time to wear down any construct, especially if it wasn't properly maintained like the sky suppression.

'This conflict has most likely been going on for generations. So absorbed in their infighting, they didn't even notice the changes in the sky suppression. Disgusting.'

Damien didn't need to think anymore. The entire Forest Elf race of this continent was corrupted, he could clearly see it through the information the World Core provided.

'First, let me transport all the Dark Elves back to their territory. After that, I can just wipe the Forest Elves entirely.'

It was only possible because he had no need to aim. If Damien was in the midst of a large battle with comrades like what would take place on the mainland, he wouldn't be able to achieve the same feat.

But on this unnamed continent, the conditions were fulfilled.

It didn't take long for him to forcefully teleport all the Dark Elves back to their territory. Only 3rd class warriors were deployed, so it wasn't difficult at all.

And once he did, he stood in the sky above the Forest Elf territory and extended his hand to the Heavens.

"To the sinners residing below, I shall allow Heavenly Judgement to cleanse your sins and set you free."

Thunderclouds rumbled and grew, covering half the continent in an instant.

And then, a lightning hell broke loose.

A curtain of lightning, no, a tsunami of it fell to the ground and enveloped the entire Forest Elf territory. As lightning strikes continuously barraged the ground, there wasn't a single square meter of land that remained safe.

And under the merciless barrage, the roughly hundred thousand Forest Elves that conspired with the Nox were wiped out together.

Only their leader, a 4th class being, survived the smiting. But even he died to Damien's blade soon after.

Damien nodded indifferently once he finished. 'Good. This is faster than my original schedule. It's time to move on to the next phase.'

Chapter 487 Clean-Ups [1]

September 20XX, Sector 8

As the home of the Plant Races, Sector 8 was widely regarded as the weakest of the 9 Sectors. The only reason Sector 9 was ranked below it was due to the fact that Sector 9 was only about half the size of the other Sectors, contributing to its weaker combat power.

Currently, the executives of Sector 8 were in turmoil, unable to decide their next move. Starting a few days back, small skirmishes and disappearances began spreading through their territory.

In normal times, these events wouldn't even reach the ears of the top experts in the Sector, but these weren't normal times.

News arrived from Sector 1. Sector 9 was annihilated by the Nox.

Knowing this, the higher-ups in Sector 8 were especially paranoid about the events in their territory. Even they were aware of their weakness compared to the other dominant races.

Each race that was able to rise to the status of dominant race had its own special characteristics that allowed them to do so.

For instance, the giants had extreme physical strength, while dwarves were naturally blessed by fire and metal. Humans were an outlier who didn't have any particular specialty, but their terrifying adaptability and reproduction rates weren't things to be looked down upon.

But what about the Plant Races? Why were they able to become and stay the dominant races of Sector 8?

It was simply because of numbers.

Sector 8 was never a place that indulged in the same barbaric atmosphere as the rest of the universe. While the system promoted slaughter in exchange for power, most of those residing in Sector 8 didn't follow the same rules.

They used different methods to grow strength, things like long-time accumulation of energy and natural treasures. Although these methods are just as viable as others, they took far more time to bear fruit.

Because of this, Sector 8 had plenty of potential, but was lacking in the number of experts possessed.

Their mentalities made them weak.

And now, their weakness was coming back to bite them.

A frail-looking woman stood on the crown of a massive tree that overlooked the world she lived in. Her skin was a pale green color, while her hair was a deeper emerald. Even her eyes had hues of green and yellow within.

"It is only the start, yet the elders are already clamoring in panic and calling it war. Although they aren't necessarily wrong, it's still pathetic." She sighed to herself.

"So far, there have only been small skirmishes at most. If it wasn't for the abhorrent mana lingering after those clashes, we wouldn't have even been notified. With the way they are moving currently, it'll take a few more months before they launch a full-scale invasion."

The woman walked into the crown of the tree, disappearing into the foliage. Somehow, her body arrived inside a small cabin hidden within the branches.

"It would be meaningless to hope for support from the other Sectors. They likely think of our races as burdens for the coming war. But with even the central pillars of our Sector submerged in despair so early, I'm afraid our chances of survival are nil."

The woman shook her head. "Nevertheless, we must fight. I have been preparing so long for this day, and even if my preparations aren't enough, I can at least buy us time. For now, however, it is best to wait and see. The current scale of the battle isn't enough for me to make a move."

Sector 9 was destroyed in a month with all others being none the wiser. However, the current movements of the Nox didn't suggest they'd take the same approach with Sector 8.

The woman didn't want to bank on this assumption, but it was the only hope she had. If the Nox decided to directly launch a full-scale invasion at the moment, even the forces she tirelessly built wouldn't be able to resist for long.

"Haa, fate is quite the cruel mistress." The woman sighed to herself once more.

She closed her eyes, her human body vanishing. Her consciousness descended into the tree she was standing on, her main body.

'Until the time comes when I must move, I can only observe. How long will it be until our noble Sector is brought to ruin? Despite how nihilistic it feels, it still makes me quite curious.'

With that, the woman completed her thoughts, returning to the routine she spent her usual days within.

'Hmm, what should I do with these people?' Damien wondered to himself.

Currently, he was being troubled by countless gazes coming from the Dark Elves below. He didn't need to speak to them to understand what these gazes meant.

Respect, fear, reverence. Their feelings practically took physical form as they stared at him.

'Although they've been trapped in this continent for generations, they've still managed to grow considerably powerful. If the Forest Elves didn't rely on the Nox's blessing, they would've lost the war. Should I take them into the Sanctuary?'

Truthfully, Damien didn't expect there to be this kind of conflict when he arrived. He was actually expecting to wipe all life on this continent and move on, assuming that there were only around a hundred thousand inhabitants on the continent.

But the number, in reality, turned out to be doubled. Now, he had a relatively large tribe of Dark Elves to deal with.

Putting them into the Sanctuary was fine, but he didn't trust them at all, nor did he believe in their capabilities. He had no reason to take a random group of strangers as his subordinates.

But he couldn't simply leave them here. Something in the core of his being told him that ignoring them entirely would reflect poorly on his growth.

'Hmm, I'm not sure if it's possible, but I can try to do that...using Apeiron's mana reserves instead of mine should be able to accomplish it.'

Damien cracked his neck. It really was too much fun being able to pull off nonsensical feats due to his power as a Star Master.

If he wasn't careful, he might even accidentally develop a God Complex.

'Nah, there's no way I'd become that cringe. I'm a grown-ass man now. Let's just get on with it and be on my way.'

"Citizens of this unknown land, you who have resisted the temptation of devils even in the darkest of your days, I shall grant you an opportunity.

"Starting today, your continent will be connected to the mainland of this world. Whether your race dies out or adapts and becomes a powerhouse will only be up to your own determination. Persevere to the end if you desire to survive. I wish you good fortune in your coming endeavors."

It was a concise speech, but Damien made sure to gain a great deal of face with his attitude. At the same time, his mind connected with Apeiron's World Core.

[You are our master, so using our mana reserves as you please is a basic right. Even if you wish for us to form a corporeal body for your pleasure, we would comply. Please do not look down on our devotion to you.]

Damien scratched his cheek awkwardly. 'I've gotten so used to Yun's mannerisms that it feels weird talking to a World Core who has feelings. Still, don't make jokes like that again or my wives will kill me.'

[We spoke with utmost seriousness. If the master wishes to copulate with us, we will do our best to satisfy your wishes. Also, the three mistresses are not able to hear our voice, so there is no problem there.]

Damien rubbed his forehead. 'Alright, alright. Quit teasing me and lend me your mana.'

[Yes, master.]

Without warning, the ambient mana in the atmosphere began swirling around Damien's body. This mana that belonged to no one was now completely under his control.

Damien concentrated his senses, spreading his awareness to cover the entire small continent. His spiritual energy wrapped around the continent's borders like a claw.

"Warp."

The ambient mana above the continent pressed down on it heavily. Within seconds, the entire landmass disappeared from Damien's sight.

As he watched the seas churn in an attempt to fill the space left by the disappeared continent, he spoke to the World Core once more.

'Has everything been settled properly?'

[The subcontinent has been docked on the shore of the mainland. No environmental problems were detected. The continent's presence has been detected by the powerful existences of the mainland. They are moving to investigate as we speak.]

Damien nodded. 'Good. As long as the world's ecosystem hasn't been damaged by my actions, it's fine. As for those Dark Elves, everything from here on out depends on them.'

Spreading his control over the ambient mana again, Damien quickly stopped a forming tsunami. It was his fault that it formed, anyway, since the ocean only became so chaotic because he displaced the unknown continent.

'I thought you said there were no environmental problems?' He asked.

[There are now no environmental problems.]

Damien rolled his eyes. 'Alright, I get it. Anyway, my work here is done.'

Chapter 488 Clean-Ups [2]

From the start, Damien never planned to take more than a few days to deal with this unknown continent. There was another reason why he aligned his timetable with the completion of Apeiron's purge.

Earth.

It was a world that he had no connection to, yet was deeply connected to at the same time.

Actually, Damien wanted to abandon Earth after his mother moved to Apeiron. The world was simply too underdeveloped to be of use to him, and there was nothing motivating him to protect it.

Sure, it was his homeworld, but the good memories he had there were already by his side, so did he need to be sentimental about it?

Regardless of his feelings, however, Earth was a world bound to him and the first world he became the Star Master of. He couldn't just abandon it.

Now that he could communicate with that child, it was no longer a possibility.

'Luckily, Earth isn't the same as Apeiron and the Cloud Plane. It wasn't involved in the previous war at all. Although there'll still be traitors, I doubt the number and strength of them will be anything to care about.'

There wasn't a single person who would set their sights on a world like Earth, so he could cleanse it cleanly and return to Apeiron. These were Damien's thoughts as he entered the Warp Gate to Earth.

But when he arrived on the planet, he was almost forced to doubt his own thoughts.

'I knew it improved drastically, but this is too much to even be called drastic. Is this...even Earth anymore?'

His location was the sky above Los Angeles, California, his hometown. But, this city was no longer known as Los Angeles.

Heaven's Sanctuary, the home of the 12 Gods.

The massive holographic billboard outside the city made it seem like a den of scammers, but considering how the people looked at the words in reverence, Damien didn't think it was so simple.

'12 Gods? There are actually humans in this world who dare proclaim themselves Gods? Are they tired of life?'

Damien wasn't a stickler for rules, but seeing something as conceited as this made him furious.

In truth, Damien looked down on Earth. Considering how he'd already met more than one Demigod and experienced Divinity firsthand, it was only natural.

But it wasn't like his view was wrong.

Even Apeiron could crush Earth's forces like nothing. Damien didn't know the exact strength of Earth now, but he had a rough estimate. Even if they had insane growth rates, they were still incredibly weak.

But they dared call themselves gods? They dared to become content with the little power they had?

'Tch. I have some flies to discipline. Since I'm technically responsible for this world, I'll allow you to witness what true power looks like.'

His figure vanished from the sky, appearing in the middle of a massive uninhabited desert somewhere in the middle of what used to be the United States.

And then, his aura flared wildly.

Due to his mind being completely clouded by anger, Damien ended up disregarding the other changes to Earthen society during his absence, but the changes were truly drastic.

The skyscrapers that created the city skyline were no longer plain and dull. They were made out of precious materials and built in shapes that ordinary construction couldn't achieve.

When it came to transportation technology, the advent of flying cars already became too much of a trend, clogging up the airways. Most passenger vehicles had returned to the land, not that they regressed in any way.

The scene was almost straight out of a science fiction movie with all the wondrous technological advancements made through Mana Engineering and Science. The entire heroes and villains theme that earthlings embraced a few years back seemed to have calmed down as well.

Instead, Earth entered an era of exploration. Star Warriors were those who led this era, fighting off mysterious beasts and exploring deep space for the prosperity of mankind.

And the 12 greatest Star Warriors who had the power to level cities with a single attack, they were the 12 Gods worshipped by all.

In Los Angeles, at the Headquarters of the Star Association, those very same 12 Gods were currently gathered for an emergency meeting.

"What?! The mana signature is above SSS-Rank?! Are you sure the reader didn't malfunction?!" A lithe woman with fiery red hair exclaimed.

"Y-yes, Madame. We are sure the reading is entirely accurate. In the middle of the Santara Desert, there is a presence above SSS-Rank." An attendant replied.

"What is the movement of the presence? Has it done anything suspicious?" An old man with a sword on his hip questioned.

"No, it is stationary. But its aura has been flared nonstop ever since its discovery. We aren't certain whether it will make a move soon or not." A bespectacled man replied.

"Hmm, it is best if we take care of this danger before it becomes a problem. Although the 12 of us are SSS-Rank, if we work together we should be able to stop it." The old man said.

"Ha? Are you joking, old fart? Do you really want me to risk my life against something like that? No way!" A teen in a hoodie scoffed.

"It is our duty as the hope of humanity to help! Regardless of whether we live or die, we must kill that being!" An armor-clad warrior shouted.

"Hmph. What hope? You're just a bunch of pathetic people drunk on power. If it wasn't for you lot forcing me, I would have never joined this bullshit organization." A brunette woman harrumphed.

The 12 Gods might've been portrayed as transcendental beings to the masses, but reality was far from that expectation.

They were simply humans with power. Even their beliefs differed vastly. Getting the 12 of them to work together wasn't an easy task at all.

But, the 12 Gods weren't newly crowned to their positions. By this point, the governments of the world already knew how to deal with them.

"A reward of 50 billion dollars has been placed on the ones who can subjugate that monster, but nobody has moved. The world is expecting the great Gods to save them once again." The attendant voiced.

And immediately, the atmosphere of the room switched.

Some of them truly fought for justice, some for other reasons, but a great deal of them were moved by personal power and status.

If there was a majority vote, the rest could only comply. And now that money was added to the equation, 8 of the 12 Gods readily agreed.

"Haa, whatever. You bastards can go die for all I care. I'll just watch from the back." The teen rolled his eyes and spat.

The group soon moved out, donning the special Magic Armor Suits that were made for them before they did so.

And soon enough, they arrived at the Santara Desert.

"Sheesh...even from all the way out here, I can feel that thing's aura. What is with this bloodlust?" A blonde-haired woman commented.

"Stop talking needlessly and prepare for battle. It's coming." The old swordmaster responded.

And just as he predicted, the source of the aura rapidly approached their location.

A voice suddenly appeared from behind them. It wasn't the voice of anyone they knew. And because not a single one of them could sense the presence of that voice's owner, cold terror slowly gripped at their hearts.

"Yo, so these are the rumored 12 Gods, huh. Even if I was expecting you to be a disappointment, this is far worse than I imagined."

Chapter 489 Clean-Ups [3]

"Who goes there?!"

A blonde man covered in heavy armor shouted. He was Paul Ashburn, 6th among the 12 Gods, and titled the Shield God.

When he turned around and saw the strange man who stood at his back, his aura flared. "Hmph! You must be the beast releasing that fowl aura! I shall defeat you today! For humanity!"

Paul held his shield in front of his body and charged at the strange man. His earthy golden mana raged around his shield as he did so.

Looking at the man currently attacking him, Damien rolled his eyes. When Paul approached close enough...

Pah!

A crisp slap across his face left him barreling into the desert below, his life or death unknown.

Damien sighed. To deal with these brats, a single slap would be enough. But he knew how earthlings worked. They wouldn't be able to accept their defeat if he didn't take the "bigger is better" approach.

'I have to be careful not to break Earth. Although my attack force isn't at a planetary level yet, the atmosphere here is weak. If I cause too much commotion, I'll practically set the world up for extinction.'

Damien shook his head in remorse. It was a shame having to limit himself, but it wasn't like it would make any difference either way.

Rumble!

Fierce thunderclouds gathered in the sky before the 11 remaining Gods could even process the fate of their fallen comrade.

The clouds swirled chaotically, forming a massive natural disaster that covered the entirety of the desert,

Boom!

A thick bolt of black lightning struck the ground, causing hundreds of meters of the desert below to explode. And as if that one attack wasn't enough, countless bolts of lightning snaked through the chaotic clouds, waiting for their chance to strike.

The 11 remaining gods fell out of the sky one by one. The terrifying pressure of the storm wasn't something they could handle, regardless of how firm their will was.

Damien descended calmly along with them, watching their struggle in scorn.

"W-who are you?" The old man questioned through gritted teeth.

Damien raised his brow. "Oh? You actually have the balls to talk right now? It looks like at least one of you has some potential."

The 10 remaining gods gritted their teeth in indignation, but they couldn't say anything back. Quite literally.

"You know, I came back here after so many years without much expectation for Earth's growth. I have to say that this world has exceeded my expectations by a landslide." Damien spoke.

"But what of it? The twelve of you actually dare call yourself gods? With the little power you have? Even a 4th class could squash the lot of you with a single finger, let alone a god.

"Considering how the people of this world have embraced space exploration, I'm sure the twelve of you are already aware that there are higher and better worlds out there, filled with strong opponents and fortuitous encounters to help you grow stronger. Yet, you actually ignored that opportunity and got comfy on Earth instead? Pathetic."

Damien spit to the side to emphasize his point, but it wasn't needed at all. The unadulterated scorn and disdain in his gaze were enough to cause them endless humiliation.

"Tch, I wasted time satisfying my anger. Listen up, you dipshits. I don't think I'll be back here for a while once I finish my business, so I need some good slaves to run the shop for me while I'm gone."

Damien's mouth curved into a devilish grin. His words sent a shudder down the collective spines of the 11 gods.

"You interested?"

A week passed since Damien's scuffle with the 12 Gods. However, the 12 Gods were no more.

They were now termed the 12 Zodiacs for convenience's sake. And because he was a defensive expert to begin with, the Zodiac named Paul didn't end up dying from Damien's strike, leaving the number a perfect fit.

Even though it was only a week, it was an extremely busy week. Not only for Damien, but for everyone who was participating in the purge operations he started.

On Earth, Damien stood at the peak of Mount Everest, thousands of bodies lining his climb. He looked down on the world from above and spoke.

"Only a few tens of thousands left. I'm lucky that this planet is so small."

Compared to the sizes of Apeiron and the Cloud Plane, Earth was a baby. Damien's awareness had become so powerful already that covering ten thousand miles in his detection range wasn't a problem anymore.

And with the size of Earth? His awareness covered close to half of the world's surface if he stretched it.

Due to this, finding large dens of traitors wasn't hard at all. The problem was finding individuals within the mass of information he received when he spread his awareness so thinly.

'It'll take a while just tracking them all down, but killing them is easy. I should be able to finish in time.'

With that thought, Damien disappeared, heading to the next snake den to continue his slaughter.

The situation on Apeiron was different. Although they weren't struggling per se, they were having a far harder time than Damien.

Whether it be number of traitors or power level, it was all greater on Apeiron.

At the forefront of the battle stood Damien's three wives. Compared to what they originally expected, they were gaining far more from Apeiron.

The number of 3rd class traitors far outstripped the number of 3rd class members of the subjugation force. Because of that, the three women were able to practically monopolize the experience from those powerful enemies.

Their levels were rising far faster than they expected, and completion of Apeiron's purge didn't seem like it'd take more than 2 more months at most.

And when it was finished, they could return to the Cloud Plane and grind even more levels, becoming as powerful as they could before the Niflheim operation.

However, if one wanted to know which situation was the most chaotic, it was undoubtedly the Cloud Plane's.

It simply wasn't possible to keep all information about the purge under wraps for long. It was too large scale of an operation.

And once rumors spread, Tian Yang and Shangguan Yu were forced to withdraw from the battlefield to deal with the public. This did a number on the subjugation force's efficiency during battle.

Even though they still had enough battle power to slaughter the enemy, Shangguan Yu's formations and Tian Yang's spatial awareness were key to their rapid movement.

Now that it was gone, clearing the remaining continents would take far longer, perhaps even until the end of the deadline that had been set.

Sector 3 was in a state of preparation. Whether it be the Cloud Plane and the other worlds Damien already visited, or the powerful worlds in Sector 3 that he didn't know of yet, all of them were aware of the rapidly changing times.

The forces of the Cloud Plane already sounded the horn. With 5 months remaining until a large-scale war broke out to decide the fate of the Sector, there was no time to laze around.

And in this fervent atmosphere, another 2 months quickly passed.

Chapter 490 Clean-Ups [4]

Damien stepped out of the Warp Gate with a sigh. 'Finally finished up with Earth. Tch, humans are seriously rats sometimes. How did those little shits even manage to think of such hiding places?'

Damien scowled thinking about the odd places he ended up finding the traitors. It seemed news about his advent spread quickly after he started, and his time on Earth slowly transformed into a game of hide and seek.

But those traitors were truly desperate for life. They climbed inside the stomachs and...other holes of beasts to fool his senses, they dug until they were near the Earth's Core, nearly burning themselves to death in the process, if there was one good thing Damien had to say about them, it was that they sure were creative.

But after 2 whole months of such annoyingness, he finally finished his activities on Earth and returned to Apeiron.

'Hmm, so? What's changed?' Damien asked the World Core.

[Welcome back, master. We have missed your presence.]

Damien rolled his eyes in exasperation. "I'm already annoyed from all the rat chasing I had to do recently, so just get to the point."

[Understood, master. The changes are as follows...]

The World Core gave Damien a rundown on the subjugation efforts until now, and the progress satisfied him greatly.

'Hmm, so they should finish up in around a month or less. I have that much time to kill, huh.'

He did have a few more errands to run and a few more people to meet. Also, he hasn't spent nearly enough time with his mother after so long apart. It was pointless for him to help in the subjugation anyway.

The armies needed experience. Apeiron's forces had dulled considerably since the previous war, their swords no longer holding meaning. For them to build their bloodlust again, they needed battle.

'Basically, I'm useless right now. Come to think of it, I haven't spent a long period of time training in a while. Maybe I should consider it.'

"What are you thinking so deeply about?"

As he was thinking, a silvery voice came from behind him. And he knew exactly who it was.

"Alea. How did you find me so quickly?"

Alea smiled slyly. "Didn't I already tell you? Our bloodlines resonate. We must be destined by fate!"

"And why would fate care enough to specifically tell us about our destinies together?" Damien questioned with a smile.

"Why, isn't that obvious? It's because our union will cause auspicious tidings to cover the entire universe, giving us great luck in the coming war."

Damien rolled his eyes. Alea's ability to spout bullshit wasn't to be underestimated.

"You're not participating in the subjugation?" Damien asked to change the subject.

Alea shook her head. "Why should I? There are no 4th class masters for me to kill, so there's no point in participating. Besides, did you forget that I'm a beast?" Alea reminded, her gaze pointing to the fluffy white fox tails materializing above her rear.

Damien fell into thought. It was true that beasts leveled up differently, but that was only until achieving their human forms. When that happened, they would also be granted access to the system and its leveling function.

'But, a beast will always be a beast. She most likely prefers evolving her bloodline over leveling through the system. Well, since I devour everything I can devour, I can't really fault her.'

With the topic of beasts on his mind, Damien suddenly remembered where he was.

'That's right...this is Apeiron...'

An old memory resurged in his mind. Moments of pain that forged the person he was today.

Apeiron...was the location of the First Dungeon.

'Didn't I just say I wanted to train?'

Damien looked up at Alea, pondering for a second. In the end, he went with his gut. "Say, are you busy for the next few months?"

Alea's brow quirked curiously. "Hm? I shouldn't have anything scheduled until the subjugation ends. I don't know if you know this yet, but I resigned from my position as Empress!"

"You what?!" Damien exclaimed in shock.

"Hehe~!" Ales giggled. "It's not like the position matters right now anyway. We'll just be one of many in the army soon enough."

Damien shrugged. "Not like it matters much to me what your position is."

"Right, you'll love me even if I'm a little peasant girl. That's why I can't stop thinking about you."

"Or maybe you're just desperate for affection after spending thousands of years in a loveless and sexless marriage?" Damien quipped back.

Alea grabbed his ear and pulled, dragging him into her grasp. Her lips brushed against his ear as she spoke and he could feel her pillowy breasts against his chest, but Damien couldn't feel any arousal from the situation.

After all, Alea's claws were infinitely close to his neck.

"Didn't your parents ever teach you not to ask a woman about her age?" Alea said indifferently.

Damien looked away in exasperation. She caused a scene for that? Yet again, he realized he would never understand women.

"Kuhum, anyway, since you're free, do you want to come with me?" Damien coughed awkwardly.

"Hm? Are you asking me out on a date right now?" Alea teased.

Damien smirked evilly. "Sure, if you want to consider it a date then you're free to do so."

"Great!" Alea smiled. "Then, let's go already!"

"Right now?" Damien asked.

"I can't wait any longer. If I get private time with you, doesn't that mean I can inch closer to wife status?"

Damien's evil grin widened. "Hmm, you can try...if you have enough time to do so."

"W-wha—?"

Before Alea could question his words, Damien immediately used Warp. Since he was already in her grasp, there was no need for additional contact.

When the two appeared again, they were surrounded on all sides by rock. Around them, a plain stone room with light amounts of flora strewn about. Under their feet stood a teleportation array that had only ever been activated once.

"I'm back," Damien muttered, running his hand across the wall.

This place used to be filled with bad memories for him. It was the root of a great deal of his trauma. But now...?

He didn't feel anything.

"Damien? Where might we be right now?" Alea asked suspiciously.

"My, dear sweet Alea, this benevolent one heard through the grapevine that you were struggling to find 4th-class opponents to fight. So, I've brought you to a place where you can find them in droves!"

"H-hm? Ah, right I said that...yeah, that was definitely the reason why I wasn't leveling...ha...haha..."

Damien raised his brow. "Alea, dear, don't tell me you've become lazy? Oh my, this won't do! Allow me to help you solve that problem!"

"There's no need for that! I'll level plenty during the war, so until then I should help with the subjugation!"

Damien's eyes curved into crescents. He walked forward and gripped Alea's shoulders tightly.

"What kind of nonsense are you speaking? You are the mighty Empress of the Beast Domain! How can you allow yourself to be weak? Just relax and leave the rest to me. You'll become a total powerhouse in no time!"

"Hey! Wai—!"

Before Alea could complain, Damien used his connection with the World Core to scan the dungeon and send her 20 floors lower.

At that level, 4th class beings would begin to spawn.

Damien grinned. 'I've helped another lost soul on the right path. My good karma is rising steadily. Amitabha.'

After leaving Alea to do whatever she wanted, Damien began thinking about his own situation.

'I can't level right now.'

It was the cold hard truth. If he continued leveling, he'd breach the barrier to 4th class with relative ease. But he had no desire to do that.

'I want to consolidate my current power until I can't get any stronger without leveling. Dimensional Magic, my new Time affinity, my forgotten lighting, the Void Flames...there are too many aspects that need improvement.'

The reason he came to the First Dungeon wasn't to level. He came because this dungeon was a literal treasure trove.

Even the most common beast held Godbeast bloodline in their veins, even if it was a minuscule amount. This kind of treasure dungeon was the perfect place for him to find attribute sources to enhance his fire and lightning.

And the environment here would make it easier to practice his space and time elements, since the level of elemental essence in the air was far higher than on the surface.

Not to mention, he'd also get to see Alea suffering through her training while he improved, which would always be a fun sight.

As for the main reason he came, however...

'I heard there was a Demigod living in this dungeon. I wonder if it's true...?'