

# Void 501

## Chapter 501 Departing [3]

The meeting between Bai Xieren and the founding five members of the Hidden Dragon Group ended quickly. There wasn't much for them to speak about.

For the earlier stages of the operation, these members would be acting along with the rest of the Moon Squadron to infiltrate Niflheim. Only after preliminary preparations were finished would the assassinations begin.

But due to the nature of the operation, where prolonged contact between team members wasn't allowed, the formation of the group had to be done before they left the Cloud Plane.

When the meeting ended, Bai Xieren left the five members in the room to familiarize themselves with each other.

Damien looked around with a curious expression on his face. 'What a strange way to build synergy. Or are you saying that hierarchy is more important than synergy in this operation?'

His thoughts were on the words Bai Xieren left for them. According to her, the five of them would have codenames determined in order of strongest to weakest.

As for how they decided the order, that was up to them.

The shadow woman spoke first. "Since we will be working together from now on, an introduction is necessary. I am called Li Xiu. I am an expert in Darkness Laws."

Following her introduction, the transformation woman spoke as well. The relaxed smile on her face never once left even as she spoke. "Aiya, if you are being so upfront, how can I deny you? This little one is called Jiang Hualing. Well met."

"And your specialty?" Li Xiu asked.

Jiang Hualing gave her a sideways glance, smiling slyly. "My, my. Wouldn't you like to know?"

"You...!"

Before the two could quarrel, the snake man stood up abruptly and opened his mouth.

"H-hello, everyone! Y-you can just call me Hebi."

He stuttered the words out, but his mouth didn't seem to want to continue after his initial introduction. He shamefully took his seat again, looking to the last two present for help.

Damien smiled helplessly when he saw the man. He was really an unfortunate existence. Thinking so, Damien gave his own introduction to offset the awkwardness.

"I'm Damien Void. You can regard me as a spatial expert. Oh, but I'm still a 3rd class."

His second sentence caused many eyebrows to be raised, but his last sentence caused them to go down immediately after.

Even if he was a rare spatial expert, a 3rd class didn't hold much weight at all. It just went to show how highly Laws were regarded.

Seeing their reactions, though, Long Chen sighed and gave a similar introduction. "Long Chen. I'm a sword cultivator with some experience using poison. I'm also a 3rd class."

Li Xiu looked them over in contempt. She truly had to wonder what the experts were thinking, putting two weaklings on their elite team.

But she quickly ignored them. It just meant she had less competition to worry about.

"From worst to best, there is Black Dragon, White Dragon, Green Dragon, Violet Dragon, and Golden Dragon. We can easily put the two weaklings in the bottom spots, and that coward can have the Green Dragon position."

Li Xiu took three of the medallions Bai Xieren left for them and tossed them to the three men in the group. Damien was given the Black Dragon Medallion.

Looking at the last two medallions in her hand, Li Xiu finished her words. "As for me, I think I'm most fit to be the leader of our group. What say you?"

Her ending question was naturally directed at the only person in the room whom she acknowledged. But Jiang Hualing continued paying Li Xiu no mind. Instead, her gaze was focused on Damien.

"Interesting little boy, how about becoming the Golden Dragon?" She suddenly asked.

Damien raised his brow in surprise. "And why would you want me in that position?"

"Hmm...because you seem more fun than this sorry little girl?" Jiang Hualing quirked her head and said.

Damien looked at the Golden Dragon Medallion in Li Xiu's hand. It'd be a lie to say he wasn't tempted.

Even disregarding the fact that Damien was nigh invincible in the Cloud Plane, he could still defeat everyone in this room.

After all, the three 4th class existences on the team all focused on assassination. Especially against Li Xiu, who mainly specialized in stealth, Damien's spatial awareness and Void Physique made him practically impervious.

'But...what's the point?'

Damien smiled lightly. He clutched the Black Dragon Medallion in his hand and shook his head. "No, I'm okay with the position I have now. If you guys want to fight amongst yourselves, you can, but I'll be leaving now. I need to tell my wives goodbye, after all."

Damien's smile was real. As he flashed away from the meeting room without any prior warning, his smile remained.

The Golden Dragon Medallion was indeed tempting, but it wasn't what Damien wanted.

What did the Golden Dragon Medallion mean? It was the mark of the leader and the strongest team member.

It was a position filled with responsibility, and the one who filled that position would be given the most challenging assignments.

Then...what about the Black Dragon?

Of course, the Black Dragon position was more like a substitute for the team than a team member. Although they'd still be given missions, they weren't needed most of the time.

Essentially, they had an incredible amount of freedom.

Damien's grin widened. 'The old man is still looking out for me even at this juncture. I have to give him something in return one of these days.'

Damien understood the message he was given. He was never meant to be the Golden Dragon in the first place.

No, even the Hidden Dragon Group was merely a cover built for him. Long Chen was added to that group so he'd have someone trustworthy to both connect him to the main headquarters and aid him in his movements.

Damien's job was assassination. There was no doubt he'd be assigned to carry out this task plenty of times, especially since Bai Xieren knew his true worth.

But in the times when he wasn't needed, Tian Yang was allowing him to move on his own and explore. His master was trusting his ability to aid this operation.

As Damien went to visit Rose and Ruyue one last time, Tian Yang smiled lightly in another area of the floating island.

'That's right. When we get to Niflheim, run wild. I shall cover your rear and take care of the aftermath.'

Tian Yang could see it. He could see the quality within Damien that not many people had. He could see what would best be termed as "the Universe's favor" for Damien.

Even though Damien always ended up a small player, he was always a part of the grand flow of the universe.

Wherever the most pressing issues were, Damien was guaranteed to stumble there as well.

The 3000 Beast Mountain Range was a perfect example of this conjecture.

And Tian Yang knew. With each world-changing event that Damien experienced, he played a bigger role than the last.

With him roaming free in Niflheim and having his own adventure away from the constraints of the military...

Tian Yang could only suppress his excitement and wait to see what surprises his disciple would bring him this time.

Chapter 502 Departing [4]

Preparations for the Niflheim operation were done mostly in secret. The only large meeting was the first one where those participating were split into their respective squadrons.

After that, at most only individual squadrons met. There was no need for further discussion as a large group since everything was being coordinated by the leaders.

After one more week passed, it was time for the Moon Squadron to set off.

Damien stood in front of Rose and Ruyue. The air between the three was filled with sorrow for parting.

Due to the nature of their job, the Sun and Moon Squadrons would arrive in Niflheim first. Only after the 6 month period given to the Moon Squadron to secure themselves would the Star and Celestial Squadrons arrive in the new world.

It was a ploy to not attract too much attention, as well as a move for efficiency.

Sadly, this meant Damien would have to spend another 6 months away from his wives.

"It seems like every time we get together, we're separated immediately after." Damien sighed sadly.

But there was nothing he could do about it.

Rose shook her head. "Don't talk nonsense. Separations like these are only so that we can build a future where we will never part, right?"



She looked at Damien endearingly as she spoke, and he understood her hidden meaning. Returning her smile, Damien echoed her last word. "Right."

He turned to look at Ruyue, who immediately turned her head away.

"Are you angry?" He asked softly. Ruyue shook her head furiously.

"I-How could I be angry?" Ruyue muttered. "It's just that you're so crazy when you're alone, how can I trust you to keep yourself safe?"

Rose nodded her head in agreement. "You're right. My only worry is that he'll do something masochistic again for the sake of his goal."

Ruyue's back straightened as she received Rose's support. She became bolder with her words. "Besides, who knows how you'll go around chasing flowers and spring scenery when we are not with you? Even when we are together with you, you still manage to attract more women!"

Rose's nodding became vehement. "I know, right?! He's even seducing beauties without doing anything recently. It's really troublesome."

Rose's words brought back memories the trio had of a certain Empress in Apeiron. The way she would pester Damien in the time before they left the world, both Rose and Ruyue were irked by the fact that she was too strong for them to handle alone.

If Elena was still here, they'd stand a chance, but...

Rose shook her head. There was no need to be sad over Elena's departure since they'd inevitably meet again in the future.

Since Elena was leaving to get stronger, Rose needed to focus as well. If there was one person she refused to lose to, it was Elena.

The trio of husband and wives continued their conversation deep into the night, along with satisfying some of their physical cravings for each other.

But Damien still wasn't able to take the final step with Ruyue. When he tried, she put her finger over his mouth and whispered into his ear.

"Come back safe this time as well, and I'll let you do whatever you want to me."

It went without saying that Damien's lust was piqued by her words. The night the three shared after that was especially exciting.

But the sun and moon had to interchange at some point. The continuation of natural order wouldn't pause for the missing sentiments of three people.

And when the sun rose across the horizon of the Cloud Plane, Damien found himself standing atop a large flight-type artifact that could house the 650 members of the Moon Squadron.

'This artifact is surprisingly modern. The design is similar to an aircraft carrier, except it's a spade vessel. How curious.' Damien commented to himself.

The atmosphere inside the ship was completely different from the Cloud Plane. If Damien had to explain it, he'd say that the genre changed from Eastern Fantasy to Sci-fi.

'This bodes well for the coming trip. Taking the advanced equipment those scientists on Earth had, I'm assuming this Niflheim dabbled into mana engineering and science far more than those of the Cloud Plane did.'

Was it a difference in cultures? Were they influenced somehow? It all made Damien curious.

Especially when he remembered an old question he harbored. After spending so much time in the Cloud Plane, it'd completely slipped his mind.

'Mana Circuits of Apeiron, In-borne Meridians of the Cloud Plane, Earth seems to be developing a system of Mana Circles and Veins...will Niflheim show me something different as well?'

Worlds were so curious. Damien remembered the reason his spark of adventure shone so brightly. He utterly loved discovering all these small things.

Although the mana utilization methods of each place being different didn't affect their battle prowess much, it told to how their civilization developed.

The way they utilized mana would change based on their environment. In a world of heavy technological advents like Niflheim, how did they develop?

Besides curiosity, there was also desire. The Ananta Matrix was built with situations like these in mind.

If the Niflheim method of mana utilization was useful and could be incorporated into the ever-changing Ananta Matrix...

Damien would become far more powerful without the need to face his Baptism early.

'Consolidate, consolidate, consolidate. It sounds so lame, it sounds like an excuse to run away from my tribulation. But...' Damien grinned to himself.

There's no way he'd be afraid of his Universe Baptism. He'd already gone through something similar already.

The reason for his sudden change in focus to consolidating his current power was different. Actually, the cause lay in Yun.

[4th-class is a power level that heavily relies on comprehension. The weight of one's Legend becomes increasingly important as well. If the Master wishes to firm his foundation for Godhood, it is best to reach the peak of your current power before attempting to attain the Universe's acknowledgement.]

It came suddenly one day after he received his Partial Baptism. At that point, he felt extreme confidence to break through immediately.

But before he could ride his high and make a decision he'd regret in the future, Yun spoke up.

But...there was much that Damien didn't understand about Yun's words. But he understood the gist.

"Focus on raising comprehension instead of leveling."

Damien smiled. 'It's not bad. It's actually quite fun to suppress myself and improve myself at the same time. The challenge is truly motivating.'

His current location was within the small room he was given as accommodation. His gaze was directed outside the glass-like window that decorated the side of the room.

He watched as the flight artifact slowly rose from the ground, the mana around it raging and allowing it to hover in the air.

On the ground below, he saw two dots of pink and white standing and watching the ship's departure.

He waved them goodbye, even though he knew they couldn't see him.

And his sights were set on the future, clearing his mind of anything other than it.

A new adventure was finally starting, and the war that had been looming over the horizon for so long was finally within reach.

Damien's entire body tingled in excitement as he thought about it.

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Sector 3 was located near the observable universe's periphery. In fact, it was possible for one to enter the Abyss through Sector 3.

But it was still bordered on two sides by other Sectors. Sector 4 of the Giants and Sector 2 of the Demons.

Currently, in the center of Demon Territory, a commotion was taking place.

"Lord! An Angel has visited the palace!" An alarmed voice cried out as it entered the throne room.

Lucifer, the current Monarch of Demon Territory, indifferently gazed upon the messenger.

But since he didn't speak any words, the messenger knew he was being told to continue.

"Lord, the High Angel Parsiel is requesting an audience with you. He doesn't seem to be visiting with hostile intentions."

Lucifer's eyes left the attendant and switched to the throne room doors. However, it was clear that his eyes easily pierced through such a flimsy physical barrier.

It didn't take long to find his target. The High Angel Parsiel, the very same angel who participated in the emergency meeting only a few months ago, was pacing impatiently in the reception hall.

Lucifer's placid gaze watched Parsiel for a few moments before he tiredly opened his mouth.

"Let him in. I wish to see him as well."

Chapter 503 Travel [1]

A month passed quickly after the departure of the Sun and Moon Squadrons, marking the completion of a third of their voyage.

In this time, Damien obviously didn't stay in his small cabin. His figure could be seen atop the flight artifact's surface, basking in the feeling of outer space around him.

He didn't think he'd ever get tired of this feeling. The feeling of spatial essence blanketing everything and declaring its dominion was fascinating.

Not to mention, his comprehension always felt a major boost whenever he went into the starry sky. Since it was the purest and most complex spatial essence in the entire universe, this was only natural.

'The essence is so thick and complex that most people would be shredded on contact. I used to think that any 3rd class could traverse the starry sky, but I was dead wrong.'

Even a 3rd class would need to be equipped with special artifacts to be safe in space. It was only after passing the Universe Baptism that one would become free of this restriction.

And as if to prove his thoughts, Bai Xieren's figure surfaced on the hull, walking towards him with casual steps.

"You are training even now. If there's one thing I'll commend you for, it's your spirit." She commented while observing the surrounding space.

"I didn't know Sect Masters could be so harsh to their precious disciples. Don't you care about my feelings?" Damien retorted sarcastically.



"Why should I? You no longer possess the power of a Star Master, so do you truly hold the same worth?"

Damien raised his brow at her obvious provocation. "Do you even believe your own words? Even if I can't defeat you without my Star Master abilities, do you think I won't be able to escape?"

Bai Xieren shook her head. "It isn't about escaping, it's about battle prowess. Regardless, you no longer hold the qualifications to speak casually to me."

"I'd say our current environment is where my qualifications are the highest, though? I might be even more empowered here than within the Cloud Plane since I haven't completely grasped World Force yet."

"If you wish to believe so, then that is up to you." Bai Xieren shrugged. "Nevertheless, I did not come here to squabble with you."

She extended her arm and flicked a jade slip through space. Damien also reached his arm out, and the jade slip appeared in his palm without problem.

"This is?" He asked curiously.

"Your new identity. Do you think your...appearance...makes it easy for you to stay concealed? If anything, you stand out most within a crowd."

Damien frowned at her words, but couldn't really say anything back. On one hand, they could be considered a compliment, but he surely didn't take it as one.

His fingers moved through the streaks of silver hair among his otherwise midnight black. If he had to be honest, he wanted to get rid of them too.

As he grew older, he started liking the flashy appearance he currently had less and less. Whether it be his eyes or his hair, they no longer seemed as desirable as they were when he was 19.

But, he couldn't do anything about it.

"Haa, I understand. So I just have to become this guy, right?" He acquiesced.

"Yes." Bai Xieren confirmed. "As long as you can emulate the individual described in the jade slip, you will be set. We have a master among us who can aid with your appearance."

Damien thought of Jiang Hualing, the transformation woman, and nodded. "Fine, but don't make me some kind of ugly bastard."

"So that your ability to pick up women won't be affected?"

"Hm?" Damien's eyes widened at her sudden words.

"Your wives talk about you often." Bai Xieren cracked a small smile as she walked away. Waving lightly, she gave her goodbyes.

"Practice well until we arrive. It is unknown when you'll be able to extricate yourself from this operation, so mentally steel yourself as well."

Damien rolled his eyes and nodded, switching his attention to the jade slip as Bai Xieren returned inside the flight artifact.

'This guy, let's see...his name is Damien Grey? 24 years old, male, it seems they didn't stray much from my original person...'

As he continued to read through, his face became black.

'Head Researcher of Evotech Industries? Academy-certified professor? All around genius in the mana science field? What the fuck?'

Although he had to respect the fake identity that had been made for him, he doubted how much of it would actually work.

Frankly, he was too stupid to play this role.

It was then that he noticed something else among the contents of the jade slip. It was a small mechanical chip, no bigger than a grain of rice.

'This is...!'

According to the jade slip, it was something the Cloud Plane forces acquired through trading with Asgard.

Its identity was the most updated model of an artificial assistant program that had been in development for a very long time. With its help, playing the role of a genius wouldn't be difficult for Damien at all.

However...

'This technology isn't something I'm familiar with at all. If someone within Asgard is able to control it remotely...things could get dangerous.'

It was a risk, an extreme one. Although it was also an immense benefit, it was like potentially handing over control of his life.

But would that stop Damien?

'Ha! Let's see how they try to control me.'

Damien took the chip into his mouth and swallowed it. Unexpectedly, it melted on the top of his tongue and turned into countless nanomachines that attempted to spread through his body.

Damien's eyes hardened. He immediately set up a barrier of Void Essence so that the nanomachines couldn't spread.

He was taking a gamble.

'The Void Physique has always acted as if it has a mind of its own. It let's beneficial energies stay within my body, while anything remotely harmful is devoured and converted. The only question is whether or not it'll work in this situation.'

It was already known fact that the Void Physique only worked on anything energy-based. Physical constructs wouldn't be subjected to its scrutiny. It was for this reason why the Eclipsing Shadow Sect members were able to poison him all those months ago.

'The Eclipsing Shadow Sect...'

It was truly a strange twist of fate. Yet another occurrence that took place without Damien's presence.

It was also the reason why Damien never ended up joining the purge.

As it turns out, the Eclipsing Shadow Sect sent assassins after him after news of his performance in the Empyrean Dragon Realm spread. But when the assassins arrived, Damien was already on Tang Lingzi's floating island, comatose after his tribulation.

Tian Yang took care of those assassins easily, only informing Damien about it after he returned to the Cloud Plane.

And along with the failure of the assassins, the entire Eclipsing Shadow Sect vanished into thin air.

'Did they flee? To Niflheim?' Damien wondered. If they wanted to flee, it was their only safe haven.

After all, forces like the Eclipsing Shadow Sect were under Niflheim's direct control. They didn't have any contact with the Nox's main forces.

'If you truly fled to Niflheim, it's good for me. I'll be able to exterminate you with my own hands.'

Damien clenched his fist as he thought about it. The humiliation from that day, he'd never forget it as long as he lived.

It was the first time since the dungeon that he was forced to flee so miserably, and it was the first time "humans" were able to push him into dire straits.

It wasn't that Damien looked down on humanity, but he understood how powerful beasts of the same level could be.

So to be pushed back by a group of humans, especially ones in the same Class as him...

He abhorred the thought.

As Damien's tangent came to an end, the gamble he made within his body finally bore fruit.

The nanomachines were a mix of physical construction and foreign energy, so he really was unsure whether things would work out as he expected.

But, there were no problems.

The Void Physique moved into action the second the nanomachines came in contact with his Void Essence.

Almost every single one of them was broken down into energy and devoured. The only cluster that remained intact was the one headed to his brain.

'Strange...the control chip wasn't harmful, but the devices attached to it were. This must also be how they fooled the Cloud Plane forces.'

Damien's eyes narrowed inadvertently. 'Now...is this just a crude safety measure, or are we surrounded by enemies on all sides?'

As soon as the thought entered his mind, Damien realized he needed to take action.

'Things will be interesting from now on.'

Chapter 504 Travel [2]

[Initializing...]

The green holographic text box appeared in front of Damien's eyes. Or rather, it appeared in his mind. He could see it, but it didn't project into reality like the main system window.

[Core Processor activated.]

[Checking diagnostics...]

[Diagnostics unavailable.]



[Sending report to mainframe...]

[Connection failed.]

[Connection failed.]

[Connection failed.]

[Halting attempts.]

[Rebooting...]

The voice in his head went silent for a second before reappearing. After Initializing one more time, it completely changed its tone.

[Greetings! I am the Artificial Core assigned to aid you in your adventures! Please enter your name.]

"Damien Void," Damien said curiously.

[Registering Damien Void...]

[Searching database...]

[Host identified! Damien Void has been recognized as the Host. Due to interference with the Core's systems, Damien Void will be assigned as the Administrator.]

Damien's brow finally raised. The interference messages didn't surprise him, since he was actively holding the control center within a barrier of Void Essence, but this new procedure did just that.

'This Administrator setting must not show up for anyone else since the Administrator is automatically set during initialization. It's a good thing that I saved myself, but I'm not sure if I should do the same for the rest.'

It could be dangerous. Damien's chip not appearing in the main system could be written off as a bug, but if the same thing happened multiple times, suspicion would grow and impede his plans.

It was much better to have an enemy who moved as one predicted rather than one who plotted in the dark.

'Alright, now that the setup process is over, tell me what you can do.' He thought to himself, but the chip in his head seemed to understand his intent.

[Artificial Core Processor No. 1738, codenamed Eve, is ready to assist! I can improve the host's processing power, reaction speed, and much more! Please read through the instruction manual for details.]

The green holographic window changed to show the very instruction manual that the AI just mentioned. Damien did a quick skim over it to understand its functions.

'Essentially, it's a literal virtual assistant. It can handle plenty of menial tasks, and with its ability to enhance my memory and processing power, it makes it easy for me to play my role. Not to mention...'

With another thought, the screen disappeared from Damien's vision. What replaced it was a flood of code entering his brain.

But strangely enough, this code was registered in Damien's mind as memory. He was truly being given the memories of the individual named Damien Grey.

It was a real cheat. Damien was instantly turned into a Mana Research genius.

'Well, it's not right to say that since I'm not truly a scientist. Pretending to be one should be extremely easy now, though.'

Damien shook his head and played with the artificial intelligence for a while longer, familiarizing himself with it in the process.

'This...this can be included into the Ananta Matrix.' He realized at some point. With the idea rooted in his head, Damien's thoughts became wilder and wilder.

But he held himself back.

Although he already absolved himself of the hidden dangers, he still needed to be cautious until Asgard's intentions and schemes were revealed.

Until then, he'd use the AI as it was intended, as a mere memory support and acting aid.

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A month passed without suspense after Bai Xieren's visit. Damien spent this month intermittently switching between practicing and learning more about Damien Grey who he would soon have to embody.

As it turned out, Damien Grey wasn't too different from him at all. Overall, it could be said that the man was just a muted version of normal Damien.

But, he was far more serious than the latter. Damien would have to quell his urge to mess around all the time until this mission ended.

'His family died in a car accident. It seems those are prevalent no matter where you go. Hm? I have a wife and kids?!'

The setting was done quite well. After all, having no relatives in the slightest would be more suspicious than anything. Setting him up with a family made total sense.

But having to become a family man all of a sudden...

'No, this is good too. I could use some practice for when...never mind. Xue'er has been moody recently too. I need experience dealing with kids.'

Even his home life would be training! With this somewhat depressing thought in mind, Damien continued his routine.

But not everyone was as relaxed as him. The atmosphere within the starship was becoming tenser with every passing second.

"What role do you have?" A woman asked her friend, but she was met with immediate rejection.

"Shh! That's confidential information!"

"Ah, who cares. It's not like they'll do anything to us if we share."

"R-really?"

"Of course!"

"O-okay, I actually wanted to talk about it to someone. My role is—"

The woman's voice was cut off as her head detached from her body. Bai Xieren stood behind her coldly, her hand dripping with blood.

A second head went flying soon after, giving a strong warning to those on board.

This operation wasn't a joke. Military discipline would be followed to the tee. If a rule was broken, punishment of the same severity would be dealt out.

And the punishment for leaking or attempting to leak confidential information?

Death without mercy. Regardless of who the ones giving and receiving were.

Long Chen sat to one side of the large recreational area with a troubled look on his face.

To say that he was uncomfortable didn't do justice to his current feeling. And the only friend he had on board the ship was busy training in an environment he couldn't reach.

'Show me my information again.' He muttered inwardly.

[Affirmative. The Host's chosen identity is Long Aotian, a research assistant under Researcher Damien Grey, a prominent member of the Mana Science and Engineering communities within Niflheim.]

Long Chen scrunched his nose. Both the overly domineering name he was given and the eerie feeling he got from having to serve under someone named Damien irked him unendingly.

As he wallowed in this feeling, a woman appeared at his feet. Or rather, she appeared from his shadow.

"What is it this time?" He sighed. He couldn't count the number of times this woman had done the same thing since they boarded the ship.

"Spar with me." And her question was always the same.

They sparred once near the beginning of their journey. Although Long Chen wasn't able to defeat Li Xiu, he was able to push her back somewhat by relying on his sword and poison together.

With Li Xiu being an entry-level 4th class, Even this much was considered a loss. Ever since that day, she would constantly pester Long Chen to spar with her again.

While he accepted some and denied some, her challenges weren't the only burdensome thing about her. Long Chen didn't like the look in her eyes at all.

'What is this sticky feeling...don't tell me she...?' He didn't want to accept it, but he understood that it was a possibility.

As he lamented over his strange fate, Long Chen proceeded to ignore Li Xiu and direct his gaze out into the starry sky beyond the glass.

'It must be nice...'

He couldn't help but be jealous of his closest friend. That annoying guy was able to experience the wonders of that atmosphere with his bare body.

But Long Chen was able to quickly dispel his negativity. Damien had his path, while Long Chen had his. While Damien desired to control space, Long Chen desired to sever it so it could never be repaired.

With them moving in practically opposite directions...



Long Chen was more than just a little excited for the battles they'd have in the future.

## Chapter 505 Niflheim [1]

As the final month of the voyage to Niflheim passed, a meeting between a certain Demon Emperor and High Angel came to a conclusion as well.

Parsiel left the main palace with a relieved sigh. 'It is good that the demons are still holding strong. Lucifer has been ruling them properly.'

It had to be known that the Demon Race and Angel Race were diametrically opposed upon birth. When the universe wasn't experiencing extraneous circumstances, it wasn't strange to find them at each other's necks.

But an inborn hatred couldn't always determine one's fate. The peak experts of the two races were actually on relatively good terms, being the leaders of the two strongest forces in the universe.

The meetings that took place on and off for the past month were held on these good terms. When Parsiel left, he didn't have anything negative to say about the Demon Race at all.

The overall situation, however, was a different story.

'It seems a punitive force has begun working in Sector 8. Considering the passive nature of most Plant Race experts, they won't be able to hold on for long...is Luciel still bent on waiting for the opportune moment?'

He left the Land of Heaven, what Angels termed their sector, without warning Luciel at all. The reason was exactly the Angel Race Leader's inaction in the face of catastrophe.

'How many more people have to die before you decide to move? ...or are these deaths what you desire? Regardless, I cannot follow your ideology.'

His thoughts hadn't reached the point of insubordination quite yet, but he was questioning his leader easily. Although Angels had a habit of not questioning their authorities, Parsiel was always different.

It was the reason why he never rose to the true highest circle of class. His viewpoint just didn't align with theirs.

Parsiel almost felt ashamed by how well he got along with the Demons instead. Even if they were brutal and cunning, they at least had their priorities straight.

'Despite everything I say, neither the Angel nor Demon race is who my gut is telling me to rely on. It truly makes me curious...what kind of trump card have the humans come up with in the past 10,000 years? Why does my intuition favor them so heavily?'

The only way for him to find out was to head to the Human Domain himself. It would take another 6 months at least for his travel to come to a close, but Parsiel didn't mind.

To an old monster like him who had lived tens of thousands of years, what did a mere 6 months matter?

With this thought in mind, he continued his trek. Although he was delayed occasionally due to various matters along the way, he always faithfully returned to the mission he assigned himself.

And as that happened, a month went by. The various machinations of those throughout the Human Domain began to converge.

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"Listen well. Although we, the Cloud Plane forces, are at the head of this operation, we are not the only ones participating."

Bai Xieren's indifferent voice traveled through the starship as she gave a few final words before they arrived at their destination.

"Within the Human Domain, there were nine worlds that stood united at the forefront of battle. Bloodland, Hatia, Asgard, Apeiron, the Cloud Plane, Mirrorbloom, Rihevan, Phiroah, and Ataraxia.

"Of these, Rihevan and Hatia fell in the last war, the remnants of Asgard have become a mere rebellion within Niflheim, and Apeiron has vanished without contact."

Bai Xieren's indifference faded slightly as a hint of fury colored her face.

"We, the Human Domain, have always been at the forefront of any war, protecting our universe without fail. Yet, we have now been weakened so, and the other races don't pay us as much attention, nor do they offer aid in our trying times.

"We only have each other to rely on, so infighting between forces of the Human Domain is forbidden. Anyone caught breaking this law will be punished with death.

"As I was saying before, forces from Mirrorbloom, Phiroah, and Ataraxia will be aiding us in this mission. Although you most likely will not encounter them, I am giving you fair warning just in case.

"Cooperate without conflict if they are with us, and kill without mercy if they are against. As for which side they fall into, such a thing can be left to personal judgement. Everyone here has been hand-picked by our experts, so there is no need to worry about trust."

It wasn't just that all the gathered forces were hand-picked by experts, they were also screened by Damien using his Star Master powers, and again screened by Tang Lingxi who offered him this small bit of help when he asked for it.

In essence, the Cloud Plane forces were clean. Nothing like what happened with the Wang and Xue clans would happen during this expedition.

"We will arrive in Niflheim within the day. When we do, we will land the ship peacefully. With our numbers, it is impossible for our presence to be hidden, but we can at least keep our intentions a secret.

"After all, to the rest of the universe, Asgard is simply a separate country within this world. Information on the true struggles taking place here has been largely blocked."

"How can we be sure that Niflheim won't question our entry?" An old man questioned. His eyes shone with a light of wisdom and curiosity unbefitting his age. But, they didn't look out of place on his person at all.

Bai Xieren nodded in acknowledgment. "Good question. Actually, Asgard's forces were once forced to take a Mana Oath to never reveal their situation to outsiders. Naturally, it was an Oath made after all loopholes were extinguished."

"Then..."

Bai Xieren smiled for the first time. Even if it was a cold smile that reeked of killing intent, it still looked immensely beautiful on her face.

"The Oath even covered whether or not information was leaked after death, forbidding this action. But...what if information never leaked? What if the information was found by a third party without Asgard's knowledge?"

"What if the person who found the information was a Niflheim native since birth, but wasn't a part of Asgard?"

"What you're saying is...there is an insider that is helping us?"

Bai Xieren's smile became mysterious. "Whether it is an insider or someone from our own ranks doesn't matter. What matters is that we are guaranteed safety at least until we have landed on the surface. After that, it is up to us to survive."

Bai Xieren continued her speech, going over the ins and outs of the operation and the various ways the web of information would interconnect, but Damien had already withdrawn his awareness by this point.

He was only "technically" a member of the operation while he was actually using it as a front to move alone. Due to this, he didn't need to know details that exceeded his station.

His gaze moved to the horizon, or whatever the equivalent term was when one was floating through space, and locked onto a certain planet drifting in the distance.

'Mm, I believe now would be the best time to separate.'

He held to the plan he created over a month ago. Because of Eve, the AI chip in his head, he was able to understand the general position of where his role was supposed to be.

After arriving there, things would progress naturally.

And according to the main plan, he was only supposed to arrive at this place after leaving Asgard secretly.

But Damien didn't want to associate too much with those inside the starship. His existence, to this day, was only known to the Hidden Dragon Group and Bai Xieren. How could the others notice him when he was merged into the folds of outer space for the majority of the trip?

Since his identity was covered well and the opportune moment was upon him, the only thing left to do was act.

His figure flashed away, appearing within the cabin of a certain swordmaster. Without warning, he grabbed the latter's shoulder and flashed away again.

"No time to explain. This is going to be a bumpy ride, so make sure to enjoy it!"

Those were the last words Long Chen heard before his vision became blurred with a flurry of colors.

Chapter 506 Niflheim [2]

The rushing winds were so loud that even calling them roars didn't do them justice. As two men plummeted to the surface of an unnamed world, their bodies were almost ripped to shreds by the wind alone.

But why did it seem like they enjoyed it?

"AHHHHHHHHHHH!"

"WOOOOOOOOO!"

Two vastly different screams were lost in the wind. It wouldn't be long before the two were set aflame by their velocity.

As for how they arrived in such a strange situation, it was really simple.

Damien's teleportation range spanned around ten thousand kilometers at its full potential, but at that distance, he couldn't quite pinpoint where he'd land when he appeared.

Not to mention, Niflheim was still far more than just a mere 10,000 kilometers away when he grabbed Long Chen and left the starship.

With Long Chen unable to wear the chaotic space with his body alone, Damien was forced to hastily teleport them before the negative effects could impact them.

Essentially, a hasty and not-carefully-planned teleportation trip ended with them falling into Niflheim's atmosphere and dropping to the ground with its gravity.

Gravity that Damien realized was a few times that of the Cloud Plane.

"LET'S GOOOOOOOOOO!"



Damien's excited shout didn't make it very far. Even Long Chen didn't hear it. But it perfectly summarized his current excitement.

Excitement from the new adventure in front of him and the insane circumstance that started it, when he arrived on the surface he wouldn't be able to display these emotions, so he let them out in full while they fell.

It was exhilarating. Even while knowing he could use mana to stabilize himself or teleport to safety, it was still exhilarating.

It was the raw human emotion that one would feel when they fell through the sky unbarred by anything and everything.

On the other hand, Long Chen was experiencing sheer terror. It was one thing to fly in the sky, it was another to fall through it.

In his shock, he even forgot that mana was a viable option to stop himself, so he continued his descent with Damien.

As they fell, Damien checked over his body with his awareness. His hair was pitch black without a single stain, and his eyes had reverted to their original amethyst color. Compared to his usual appearance, he looked exceedingly normal if one ignored his attractiveness.

'Now that it's gone, I kind of miss it. Then again, it's nice looking like a normal human again.'

With complicated feelings in mind, he grabbed Long Chen and roused his mana, teleporting them closer to the ground while avoiding the hassle of becoming living meteors.

However...

'Ah, right. Teleportation carries momentum.'

Instead of saving them, he actually accelerated their fall. Tongues of flame were starting to appear on their clothing.

But even this wasn't a concern. Damien enjoyed the adrenaline rush from his first time sky-diving for a while longer at their new speed...

...all while ignoring Long Chen, who became quite the comedic sight when he could no longer hold back any food he'd ingested prior to this experience.

When the two finally reached the ground, though, Damien used vector control to absolve their momentum, leading to an anticlimactic end to their exciting escapade.

And along with their feet touching the ground...

A sword bursting with Sword Aura swung at Damien's head accompanied by the roars of a dragon. The Emyrean Dragon Sword was itching for blood.

But Mirage appeared in its path at the worst possible moment, clashing with it and causing sparks to fly.

"Hey! How could you attack your teammate?!" Damien shouted in mock indignation.

"You...! How dare you call yourself a teammate!" Long Chen yelled back. He could still feel the terror that ran through his bones. It was hard for him to even swing his sword with how shaky his legs currently were.

Damien smiled wryly and shook his head. Perhaps he had gone a bit too far this time, but how was he supposed to know that Long Chen had an irrational fear of heights?

"It's not a fear of heights, it's a fear of being dropped to death from the chaotic space above! How are you going to call that irrational?!" Long Chen lamented.

"Ah, don't sweat the small stuff," Damien responded causally. His gaze changed immediately after. "We are in enemy territory now. We must act with prudence."

Long Chen's face went through the same motion, hardening when he realized the situation. The Emyrean Dragon Sword vanished into his body, a pair of glasses surfaced on his face, and he became stoic.

"Yes. I am Long Aotian, assistant of Researcher Damien Grey. And you?" King Chen asked seriously.

Damien almost couldn't stop the smirk forming on his face. Those old fogeys at the top were really accommodating this time around.

A pair of glasses appeared on Damien's face as well, framing his shining purple eyes quite nicely. Strangely enough, his original eye color looked far more mystical than his unique one.

Damien changed his clothes at the same time as he put his glasses on. Wearing a lab coat over a black turtleneck and equally dark pants, he looked like the typical picture of a young researcher with a bit of style.

"I am Professor Damien Grey. It is a pleasure to meet you, my assistant." He finally replied to Long Chen.

Long Chen's face was a sight to behold. He looked like an orc/ogre hybrid with how his face scrunched and frowned.

"H-hello, sir," He finally squeezed out, "I look forward to working with you."

Damien smiled in return. "Haha, what are you talking about? Xiao Aotian, haven't we been comrades for years? There's no need for this flattery talk between us."

Damien looked around to identify their current surroundings. It wasn't by luck that they landed in such a barren and desolate place far away from civilization.

"Hmm, this is strange. The Mysterious Fire Fruit was stated to be in this area, but I can't find any traces of it. Could we have been mistaken?" He muttered to himself.

"No, sir. This is the location we were given. Perhaps it is underground?" Long Chen responded.

"Mm, Aotian, you are experienced in matters related to the subterranean world. Aid me in exploring for a moment. We can return to Evotech tomorrow if need be."

Long Chen nodded and obediently followed his command. Their switch into the characters they were playing happened rapidly and flawlessly.

If one didn't see them appear out of thin air moments prior, one would have no idea that they were different people.

And such was the case for the eyes watching the duo as they dug through the ground.

"It is as the information stated." A lone voice spoke through a communication device on their hip.

"Professor Damien Grey and his assistant Long Aotian are within the Outer Wilds as I speak. From the disarray of their clothing and the tracks left behind, I can confirm that they have been in the area for many days already."

The tracks the voice was referring to were naturally prepared for when Damien and Long Chen arrived at this location a few days later, but due to Damien's decision, they'd arrived far earlier than they were supposed to.

And perhaps this decision was the one that saved their lives.

"Affirmative. Professor Damien Grey and Long Aotian will be registered as verified persons. Notify the rest of the force that they are no longer suspicious."

The voice gave a sound of acknowledgement to the one who replied to their report. Even though they'd personally verified what they needed, they couldn't help but feel suspicious about the whole thing.

The timing at which the two appeared in front of their vision was simply too convenient.

But then again, it wasn't their job to worry about the small things. Now that the report was submitted, there was no need for them to stay within this desolate wasteland.

'It is about time. That ship should be landing in Asgard territory within a few days. I must regroup with the Phantom Squad and head there to observe.'

With this last thought, the individual vanished from the Outer Wilds, using a teleportation device to return to the nearest city.

And at the same time, Damien and Long Chen's gazes met, with them heaving a collective sigh of relief.

Their time in Niflheim had begun with an extremely close encounter.

Chapter 507 Niflheim[3]

"What was that?"

Long Chen immediately began questioning Damien after they felt the earlier gaze disappear. Naturally, he was careful enough to do so through mental transmission.

"Hmm, it looks like my guess had at least a little bit of merit. To think there'd be people waiting for us here." Damien muttered to himself.

Looking at the confused Long Chen, he began roughly explaining the situation.

"So essentially, there might be people within Asgard working against us?" Long Chen asked with furrowed brows.

"Whether or not it's that, we can't say without evidence. All I know is that there's something going on behind the scenes of this operation. Even if our enemies don't have completely accurate information, they at least have clues of our identities."

The two continued speaking about the problem, but they couldn't come to any solid conclusions. They simply had too little information.

Instead, they reviewed information on Niflheim and their current surroundings.

"Currently, we're in the Outer Wilds, a wasteland that surrounds the Hub City of Evalion. This Outer Wilds is a place wrought with Nox corruption, so life can't persist within. However, some rare flora and minerals thrive in these conditions.

"Not to mention, signs of the previous war still persist in the Outer Wilds. This is a land wrought with the treasures and legacies of the fallen, so many scavengers venture them to try their luck."

Long Chen nodded. "My information is the same. The Mysterious Fire Fruit our aliases were searching for is especially important in our current research."

"Mm." Damien acknowledged. "It's a little insane. This guy was researching duplication of matter, specifically treasures. If he succeeded, elixirs and the likes could be mass-produced with little to no material cost."

"While I don't quite understand what it all means, I at least know it's groundbreaking research." Long Chen finished off.

Their alternate identities were oddly well-built. It was almost as if...



Damien shook his head.

Regardless of whether Damien Grey truly lived or not, it didn't change the fact that Damien was now in his place. His fate was an inconsequential matter compared to the safety of Sector 3, Damien's home.

"Evalion is a hub city, one of 16 hubs present within the Outer Wilds that span the entirety of the rest of the world. Asgard's territory is around the size of 3 of these hubs at most." Damien moved on to the next topic.

After all, Evalion was going to be their home for the foreseeable future. Not to mention, it held immense strategic importance.

Evotech, the leading conglomerate in the fields of research and science, it was a place where dreams were made reality, where the impossible was turned possible.

But in reality, it was precisely the Nox's most important asset in Niflheim. The research done by Evotech was most likely the main reason a Demigod was sent to oversee the world.

Sector 3 was already down on its luck. Without something so important, the Nox would have no need to send a crucial part of their battle prowess, a Demigod.

Although there was no way for Damien to know how those outside the sector viewed it, he at least had an inkling that there had to be something important within Evotech.

Otherwise, why would the Nox bother with it at all?

"But before we can pry into that, we have to find the Mysterious Fire Fruit."

Damien and Long Chen spent far longer in the Outer Wilds than they originally expected. The Mysterious Fire Fruit held the word "mysterious" in its name for a reason.

In the end, they found it 60 feet underground submerged by a pool of bubbling lava.

It was only after this small task was finished did the two finally relax.

"Should we return?" Long Chen asked tentatively. Even though they'd thoroughly rehearsed their new roles, it didn't stop his nerves.

He was never a man built to do these kinds of covert jobs.

Damien cracked his neck and resounded with a smile. "Yeah, let's go have some fun."

He, unlike Long Chen, had no reservations. Judging from the previous Damien Grey's memories that Eve kept feeding him, Evalion was actually quite the place.

A circular emblem appeared in Damien's hand when he willed for it. The same happened with Long Chen.

The two poured their mana into the devices without hesitation, aiming for a certain marking within the device's systems.

And when their mana mingled with that marking...

Their bodies disappeared from the Outer Wilds without leaving a trace.

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Considering how there were only 16 Hub Cities in total, each one held a frightening population of people.

Evalion, among them, was the most crowded, being the home of Evotech and many other prominent businesses. Its population was well into the hundreds of millions, its size being just as massive to house all these people.

But despite how crowded the massive number made it seem, Evalion was fairly orderly.

The streets and alleys of the city formed an interconnected web that made it so one could reach anywhere in the city from anywhere else if one wished to.

Interactive holographic technology allowed for the denizens of this world to carry personal devices that far exceeded the technological capabilities of mana, allowing them to maneuver these complicated routes with ease.

And when mana was added into the equation, the simplicity of living became truly wondrous.

In one vein, one could say that Niflheim was an Elysium for people. But on the other hand, it could be considered a fancy cage.

People leaned towards both opinions, and there were some people who thought completely differently, but regardless of their thoughts, they lived day to day within the impenetrable barriers of Evalion.

Within a certain research center, located underground near the center of the city, two individuals materialized on a platform designated specifically for their arrival.

'This is interesting. It's more similar to my Warp skill than a teleportation formation, but the method they used to create it is completely different.'

While Damien admired their mastery of teleportation, an attendant arrived in the area and walked up to him.

"Greetings, Professor Damien! Please pardon me while I take care of the usual procedures."

A cylindrical device appeared in her hand, and after she pressed a button on its side, it projected a strange light that scanned Damien and Long Chen from head to toe.

The duo stood silent and let the device probe them. They'd been ready for this since the beginning.

But even then, they couldn't calm their nervous hearts.

Their disguises might've seemed weak, but Jiang Hualing's reputation would definitely suggest otherwise. Still, the duo hadn't been acquainted with her long enough to hold such blind trust in her abilities.

It was a thorough scan. Fingerprints, irises, even genetic matching, it was more than thorough, it was extreme.

To the level where Damien didn't know whether a technique from the Cloud Plane could counter it.

But he was underestimating the denizens of the Cloud Plane too much. Although their aesthetic made it feel as if they were living in the past, their skills certainly matched up to the current era.

They hadn't spent all those years idling.

Damien marveled inwardly as the scan came to a close. He didn't know how mana was used to fool the device, but it was truly a show of insane technical skill.

"Great! The data matches perfectly as always! Thank you for your time, Professor!"

With the attendant's words, Damien and Long Chen were immediately cleared of any suspicion on them for a considerable time period.

"Mm." Damien gave a sound of acknowledgement and walked through the doors of the reception room, entering the main building.

'Good.' He thought, inwardly smiling. 'The first step has been taken care of. Now, all that's left is to run wild.'

Chapter 508 Niflheim[4]

The headquarters of Evotech Industries wasn't actually a single building. It was more similar to a complex of buildings interconnected through translucent bridges.

But this configuration wasn't strange at all. Evotech wasn't home to just a few hundred or few thousand researchers and scientists. It was a massive conglomerate that controlled the technical advancement of all 16 Hub Cities. Evotech's shadow could be seen looming over every positive change that has taken place in Niflheim over the years.

Of course, there was an equal amount of poison in that shadow, but even those who knew of this poison didn't move to stop its spread. After all, who would dare go against Evotech?

The reception room wasn't connected to any of the surrounding structures in the massive complex that made up Evotech Headquarters. It was instead located in the direct center, blocked off from the world through the use of various technologies and skills.

Only after one completed the verification process would the rest of the world open up to them.

A series of portals would appear in front of the verified researcher. And due to the system that interconnected everything within Evotech, the artificial intelligence systems were able to accurately open portals that strictly relate to the researcher in question.

It was yet another display of arrogance by Evotech, and a declaration that they were indomitable.

Currently, Damien was facing this very array of portals. There were many of them, considering his status within the company, but there were five in particular that he kept in mind.

First was the lab where Matter Duplication research was taking place. After that came the general area where the researchers would stay if they needed second opinions on their work or simply to take a break, and third was the home of Damien Grey, which was also within Evotech.

As for the fourth and fifth portals, they were labs used for other research, more personal use than the main lab. These would naturally be useful later on, but for now, Damien didn't need them.

"Aotian, have you had dinner?" He asked lightly.

Long Chen, who was dutifully standing behind him like a servant, shook his head. "No, sir. I have been with you this entire time."

"Hahaha! You're right! Then, how about coming over to my place?"

Long Chen scratched his head. "Ah, however, I may have some business to attend to at home."

Damien looked meaningfully at Long Chen. Clearly, this brat was leaving him to deal with his new wife and kid on his own. Long Chen's role, Long Aotian, was actually an orphan!

Damien's brow twitched, but he couldn't do anything about it. He was no longer Damien Void. Instead, he was forced to give Long Chen a pat on the shoulder and send him off.

"I understand. If things get difficult, you can always let me know!"

Long Chen forced a smile and left Damien behind, walking into his own set of portals, which were limited in number to just two, and leaving.

Damien grinned to himself. From Long Curb's smile, he knew his move was successful.



'Haha, you brat. You're a million years too early to mess with this big brother.'

It was just a harmless prank. He just used a little bit of Dragon Pressure on his dear friend. Although it wouldn't be enough to harm him at all, it would make him feel incredibly uncomfortable for a good few hours.

Trying as hard as he could to suppress his grin, Damien vanished through the portal to his new home.

\*\*\*

The Evotech Headquarters wasn't just made of research labs and meeting rooms, it had a variety of different areas with contrasting purposes.

A cafeteria that served world-class food, a recreational area for exercise or simple relaxation, and even a residential area.

But perhaps the first two of the aforementioned amenities only existed due to the last one.

Ecotech was heavily insistent on secrecy. Even Mana Oaths weren't enough to guarantee their trust. Therefore, they built the various facilities in the South Wing of the building to accommodate the families of their researchers.

Even institutes had been built within the complex so children of these researchers wouldn't be inhibited by their situations.

But, many people viewed this place as a prison of slaves. Once one entered, they couldn't leave. The only ones who were allowed leave were researchers who submitted requests and gained approval from the executive board.

Essentially, only someone on Damien Grey's level was allowed this bit of vanity.

Within one of the houses in the residential area, a beautiful woman in her mid-20s stood in a kitchen, happily cooking away.

Her hair was jet black in color, and her eyes a common brown. Still, her more common features didn't diminish her beauty.

When Damien stepped through the portal, this woman was the first thing he saw. And his first impression...

'She's strange.'

Her body was average, and her face was average as well, but something about her screamed that she was a beauty.

It was like a passive charm that infected everything around it. But since the Void Physique and All-Seeing Eyes didn't react, he knew it wasn't charm at all.

[All-Seeing Eyes have been activated.]

[Status]

[Aishia Grey]

Valkyrie

Female - Age 10,023

Level 298 - [Heavenly Maiden]

Title(s): [Final Valkyrie, Daughter of Heaven, Lightbearer]

Affinities: Light, Spirit

Damien's eyes widened in shock. Under the guise of a dutiful wife in the kitchen was a battle angel that he had no chance of defeating without World Force.

"Honey! You're finally home!"

When she saw him standing in the doorway, she left the kitchen immediately, jumping into his arms and planting a firm kiss on his lips.

Damien was stunned. He was sure he was just kissed, but why did it feel so cold? It felt like if he lingered on that feeling, someone would...

"Yes, I'm home, honey. Thanks as always for the delectable greeting."

In natural Damien fashion, he ignored the warning bells and decided to tease her anyway. They were husband and wife, right? This much should be allowed.

Aishia forced a smile coy onto her face, but it was clear it was her first time trying to do so. Frankly, the way her features were scrunched was not appealing at all.

"Hehe~! How can I disappoint my amazing husband?" She replied shyly.

To an outside observer, there was nothing wrong with their conversation. But with Aishia's acute senses as a mid-level 4th class being and Damien's All-Seeing Eyes, they could clearly see each other's micro-movements, the very source of their current awkwardness.

'Fuck, she probably knows I peeked on her!'

'Shit, how did he discover my identity?!'

The duo's thinking followed the same path, but they didn't express it out loud. They continued their husband and wife act as they entered further into the house, sitting down on the living room sofa and relaxing in each other's arms.

"Honey, didn't you say you had to go out? When did you arrive?" Aisha asked curiously, traces of seriousness lacing her words.

Damien smiled. "Ah, you know how it is. Due to some unexpected circumstances, I was able to come home early. With Aotian's help, getting the Mysterious Fire Fruit was a piece of cake."

Aishia narrowed her eyes. "If you got the Mysterious Fire Fruit then what went wrong?"

"Naturally, it was the scavengers. Just before we found the Mysterious Fire Fruit, we ran into a strange one and had to scurry away."

Aishia's eyes hardened. Although she hates talking in riddles, these riddles were the reason why she understood Damien's sudden entrance.

It had to be known that his arrival was supposed to still be a few days away.

But now that he was here, nothing else could be done. The normal husband and wife conversation that hid an exchange of information continued on for a long while, stopping only when the sun rose over the horizon.

Chapter 509 Assassinate [1]

As it turned out, Aishia was truly the last surviving member of the Valkyrie race, an original member of Asgard.

She was born shortly before the Great War began, and she didn't have nearly enough time to grow her strength before the flames of war encapsulated the universe. As the youngest, she was hidden and protected by the entire race, ensuring her survival over the corpses of her brethren.

Aishia never left this unnamed world since then. She grew her strength by battling against the Nox on the surface and became a true powerhouse who could hold a say in the most important matters.

The decision to have her play his wife was actually her own. In truth, she was a close friend of Bai Xieren, who filled her in on Damien's role.

It wasn't just curiosity that drove her to his side, it was her duty and her hatred. She was here because this was the job she'd been wanting to do for a very long time, but with Asgard's conservative movements, it was always impossible.

And Damien didn't mind her presence. Although her elemental affinities weren't specialized in stealth, her power alone was enough to make her useful.

The spirit element would be a great help as well. Damien had slight familiarity with this field due to Xue'er's matter, so he was sure he could put this woman to good use.

His thoughts concluded as he stepped through a portal that appeared before him. Leaving behind Aishia and his "child" that he didn't even meet yet, he arrived at the main lab used for Treasure Duplication research.

Evotech's headquarters actually didn't have many spaces where large groups worked together. Every location where something like that was necessary was situated off-sight in one of the other 16 Hub Cities.

As for Evotech headquarters, only researchers working on extremely important and confidential projects were granted personal laboratories. The rest of the labs were used mainly for production and storage, while occasionally large groups of researchers would cooperate on especially large breakthroughs.

Regardless, the lab belonging to Damien Grey was his personal property. There were only three people who had ever stepped foot in this lab. The first was him, the second was Long Aotian, and the third...

Stepping out of the same portal as him was the very same Aishia Grey that was playing his wife. In reality, she was a researcher who worked side by side with her husband. The couple was fairly well known for their incredible synergy while working.

As the two stepped into the lab, Long Chen did the same through his own portal. When he looked over and saw Damien, he put on a smile full of flattery and walked over.

"Sir, you came in early today! I wasn't even able to tidy up the lab yet!" He said jokingly as he passed over a cup of coffee.

Damien accepted it gratefully. "Mm, you know how it is. The wife was hit with some inspiration last night, so she wanted to come in early."

Long Chen flashed an oily grin. "Hehe, I understand sir, I totally understand. I'm sure you were given plenty of 'inspiration' as well."

Damien rolled his eyes and smacked the back of Long Chen's head. "Aotian, we need to get you married soon. Alright, enough of that for now. Let's head inside."

Damien finished his coffee and put it to the side, walking through the heavy mechanical doors that stood between him and the lab.

Naturally, the portal didn't teleport directly inside the lab. The sanitation issues from such a move were too plentiful. Instead, it sent them to a reception area connected to the lab where they could prepare themselves before entering.

With the lab door opening, Damien's trio walked through individually, being scanned and wiped clean of any impurity before they could enter.



And once they completed the procedure, the small yet grand scene of the lab greeted them.

"I don't understand why we came here. Is the Treasure Duplication research that important?" Long Chen asked through sound transmission.

Damien shook his head. "It isn't that. We just arrived, and although we've cleared most of the suspicions on us, we still have to be careful. For at least the next week, we'll go business as usual and completely immerse ourselves in these roles."

Long Chen nodded hesitantly. In the end, he also realized that he was sent here to support Damien. Even without his role, just the fact that Damien took him along meant he already knew this fact.

And if so, Long Chen would simply follow. He always heard of this bastard's exploits, but never got to experience his greatness himself.

This curiosity was the only thing allowing Long Chen to ignore the sinking feeling he got whenever he thought about following Damien's orders.

\*\*\*

A week quickly passed. Just as Damien said, the trio acted in their roles without the slightest deviation. From the lab to the house and back and forth, Damien's routine was steady.

During this time, he was also able to meet his "daughter," Reva. She was a small girl around 8 or 9 years old with a cheerful personality.

Aishia refused to tell him her origins so Damien could only remain curious, but the girl's status window was truly bizarre.

[Status]

[Reva]

???

Female - Age 10

Level - 152 - [???

Title(s): [???, Child of the Abyss, ???]

Affinities: ???

It was strange. It had to be known, Damien's eyes didn't create a new status window from the information it discovered. It gained the ability to see through someone and peer into the personal status window that only they could see.

In essence, Reva's status window was naturally like that, filled with question marks even to her own eyes.

Damien was aware of the possibility, since he still had a few question marks in his status window even after unlocking his Time Affinity, but the sheer number of them was preposterous.

Obviously this child's background wasn't simple. And if her titles said anything...

Damien realized he'd have to talk to this child about it at some point, but now wasn't even close to the right time.

After all, now that a week passed, those of the Sun and Moon Squadrons had already arrived on the planet.

And of course, Bai Xieren, with her monstrous perception, already knew Damien left the starship. As if punishing him for moving without informing her, she sent an assassination mission over the second they touched ground.

Damien clicked his tongue as he looked at the information being projected into his head by Eve. Apparently, the AI Cores also had this kind of ability.

It was no wonder they were aiming to create an information network. With this kind of connection, traces of an assembly line would never be found.

Regardless, Damien continued to look over the information he was given.

His target was a woman named Audrey Price. She was a researcher in charge of Chimera experiments.

These chimeras were similar creatures to the abominations Damien met in the Trial World. As expected, those under the Nox were always the same kind.

Abominations were a great part of the Nox's strength. Along with Devil Worshipers, they were the meat shields sent out to wear down the Sectors' forces so that the true Nox didn't have to do any work.

In fact, Damien even suspected that the Nox were quite low in numbers, otherwise, they wouldn't need to rely on such strategies. But that was beside the point.

Aubrey Price worked in the North Wing, her main laboratory being Lab 1622. His job was a clean and simple assassination. Naturally, he had to leave no evidence.

Damien clicked his tongue once again. As he got ready to swipe away the information, Eve left him with yet another surprise.

'There's more?!'

Chapter 510 Assassinate [2]

In total, Bai Xieren gave him 5 assassination targets.

Along with Aubrey Price, they were named Eli Rodgers, Joe Bernard, Elizabeth Oscar, and Lynn Carter. Each of them headed a separate branch of research, and none of them were easy targets.

Wasn't this a bit too much?! Why was Bai Xieren punishing him like a jealous wife?! Damien lamented about the workload he gained when he just finally guaranteed his safety.

'It won't even be close to easy. These people don't have high strength since they focused on research, but they are constantly surrounded by guards and eyes. It'll be impossible to just kill them whenever.'

Actually, even Damien Grey had an entourage of guards that would usually stick around him, but his laboratory and home were strictly off-limits. The guards could only stay outside.

But the lab was practically impenetrable through force, and the perimeter of guards around his home guaranteed its safety.

But that was just how Damien Grey did things. He didn't know the personal preferences of those other researchers. If they clung to their lives dearly, perhaps their guards would maintain close proximity for 24 hours a day.

'Hm? Lynn Carter?'

Damien's attention was suddenly focused on the last name on the list. The name sounded oddly familiar, which didn't fit with the fact that it was his first time in this world.

Where could he possibly have...?

It didn't take long for him to recall the memory. His Spiritual World was far more enhanced than someone at his level should've been. Indelible memory was a perk of that.

Well, calling it indelible was a stretch, but Damien knew he'd get there eventually.

The memory he recalled this time, however, was actually from Earth.

A group of researchers in an underground laboratory, all headed towards the same place. A voice rang out from among them filled with complex emotions.

"Commence trial 127 for project title: Core Extraction."

Damien's eyes immediately hardened. Right, the woman named Lynn Carter was there on Earth. She and the scientists under her were in charge of a project with an exceedingly ferocious name.

Core Extraction,

To rob a world of its core, what did this mean? It wasn't just the destruction of the world, it was the destruction of all life existing on the planet.

And aside from that, if the process wasn't completed properly, the vacuum created by the World Core's absence could lead to the formation of a Dead Zone.

And in Dead Zones, even time became inconsequential. It was a true hell of blackness.

'Is this it? Have I stumbled upon something great so easily?' Damien questioned himself.

Naturally, the information he had on Lynn Carter didn't mention the Core Extraction project at all. It instead listed her as a key figure in Chimera research along with Audrey Price.

Did it mean that even those who gathered information on her didn't learn about the project, or did it mean they were intentionally hiding it?

Damien didn't know, and he had no intention of informing Aishia about it. While on the surface, she was a hero of justice and a woman filled with vengeance, Damien's trust in Asgard was waning.

Not that he had trust in the organization in the first place, but their actions only continued to build suspicion in his heart.

He needed to find a moment to sneak out. He could tell Aishia about the other assassinations, but he would keep Lynn Carter a secret.

In that way, he would have a convenient alibi.

'Should I inform Long Chen?' He shook the thought off immediately. Long Chen's involvement would most likely lead to Aishia's suspicion.

As they said, to fool one's enemy, one must first fool one's friends.

Damien locked this plan in his mind.

'To think I would find something big so quick. Core Extraction...not only should I destroy this research, but I should also learn from it. It will be very useful in the future.'



The duty of a Celestial was to rule over celestial bodies. To rule meant to bring prosperity. And for prosperity, any bad seeds needed to be pulled out before they could contaminate the rest.

If he had to destroy a world for such reasons, he'd do it without hesitation.

Currently, Niflheim was in question.

He hadn't seen the World Core yet, and he hadn't even explored the world. Still, he had the vague feeling that he was surrounded by enemies, and he didn't want to let this feeling persist.

'First, let's complete Bai Xieren's task. I've always thought an assassin with spatial powers would be overpowered.'

An assassin who had no limits but their own imagination. An individual who could appear anywhere as long as the ever-present folds of space accepted his entry.

Even if spatial locks existed, and spatial fluctuations left traces, Damien had the means to deal with both of them.

And he also possessed the ultimate weapon for killing silently.

Wisps of pitch-black essence snaked around his fingertips so covertly that not a single soul noticed its presence. A ruthless grin threatened to spread across his face.

Once again, it was time to go hunting.

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In the dark of night, somewhere in the South Wing, a woman lay silent in bed, getting ample rest during the night so she could return to her research when day came.

Her breathing was even, her chest rising and falling steadily. Unfortunately, she was alone in the bed.

But to her, this was quite fortunate indeed. Research mattered far more than any mere human relationship.

As for the woman's identity? Naturally, she was Aubrey Price.

As she slept, guards moved around the perimeter of her house. There was even a burly man blocking the entrance to her room, and another in front of the window.

When it came to security, although Aubrey wasn't the most uptight, she also wasn't lax.

But tonight, she'd learn that it wouldn't have mattered either way.

A shadow appeared on a roof roughly a kilometer away. Its cold eyes easily gazing the distance and set its target.

Vector control moved into action, any momentum his spatial fluctuations left being muted to the extreme. At this level, it could only be considered a regular movement of the spatial layers.

Flash!

The shadow disappeared. When its figure became visible again, it was hovering over the sleeping figure of Aubrey Price.

Pitch-black essence covered the shadow's hand. In his mind, he said a small prayer.

'May you be tortured for eternity in the depths of hell, your soul never being allowed into the cycle of reincarnation.'

His hand covered her face. In that instant, the ever-present yet nonexistent essence on his hand snaked into her body, rapidly spreading.

The shadow didn't even wait to see if his work was finished. Without a sound or even a single trace, he vanished from the area, reappearing on the same rooftop as before.

As he watched from safety, Aubrey's body slowly turned pitch-black, scattering into a fog that merged with the Void Essence in the room and dispersed into the atmosphere.

And with the qualities of Void Essence, there would never be a single trace of it left.

Even if those who investigated found traces, they'd only find spatial mana. In this case, they'd assume she was kidnapped rather than killed.

Damien smiled at his handiwork. Assassination was far easier than expected. Twirling the access card in his hand, he flashed away, none being the wiser about what went down that night.

As for Damien's destination? It was the location the card in his hand granted access to. It was a privilege belonging to the lab's owner alone, a way to bypass the troublesome procedures that scanned even one's genetic makeup.

'It's time to raid her lab. If I don't like what I see...I don't mind letting it go up in flames.'