

Void 511

Chapter 511 Scent [1]

Damien's figure appeared on a rooftop far away from Audrey Price's lab. Despite the fact that he had the key, he still had to be cautious.

Surveillance was strictly forbidden within the labs for various reasons, but any areas attached to the lab would be heavily surveilled. It was almost impossible to sneak inside without being noticed.

And although Damien didn't have to worry about this problem as much due to his skill set, it didn't mean he was completely free from it.

His spatial abilities, at least in terms of travel, depended heavily on awareness.

His awareness was a medium by which the spatial layers could connect to him. His body became part of a circuit through which he could move with the utmost ease. Naturally, as his awareness spread further and his perception weakened, his accuracy in moving would also decrease.

This synergy with the spatial layers was the reason why Damien's awareness could span such a vast range when his strength and mental power hadn't yet reached that level.

But this method was also somewhat flawed. Because of the heavy security in the walls surrounding the lab, his awareness couldn't directly penetrate inside.

There was a reason why Evotech was so assured of its security.

'It's still possible, but I'll have to get in close to do so.'

Damien furrowed his brows and surveyed the area carefully, taking note of the positioning of every nearby camera. His goal was to find blind spots.

But of course, a massive corporation like Evotech wouldn't leave such an easy way out. Damien clicked his tongue when he realized it. 'Looks like I'll have to do this the hard way.'

His figure flashed away, his body swimming through the spatial layers with ease. All of a sudden, his finger moved, flickering with black lightning. Under his fine control, the lightning split into four strands that each moved in separate directions, still submerged in the spatial layers. Until...

Bzzt!

Damien removed his control, letting the lightning enter the Real Plane once more. The second it did, the four strands flew into four nearby cameras, sending a shock through them and temporarily stalling their circuits.

'It's convenient. They use a combination of electricity and mana, essentially being a far more evolved variant of earth. Because of this, old tricks still come in handy.'

As Damien thought, he exited the spatial layers directly outside the lab's wall. His body was only in view of four security cameras that had already been stalled. Knowing this, Damien put his hand up to the wall and concentrated.

What he was trying to do wasn't as related to spatial movement as his usual skills, but it was still somewhat related. The main player in this case, however, was vector control.

Damien connected himself to a new circuit. He sensed around him for the vectors relating to the wall. His senses went inward and located his personal vectors as well.

His goal? Vibration.

Through precision control of the surrounding vectors, Damien heavily vibrated the molecules in the wall, doing the same for his body as well. When their frequencies finally aligned, he plunged straight into the wall, rapidly swimming through it and coming out the other side.

"Fwah!" Damien let out the breath he'd been holding. The stunt he just attempted was far too terrifying even for him.

Though, once he was around halfway through the wall, his awareness was able to penetrate the rest, so he was guaranteed safety regardless.

After taking a few moments to steady his breathing and heart rate, Damien finally looked around the lab.

'As expected, there's nothing on the surface.'

Damien already expected it. That was half the reason he grabbed the access card after killing Aubrey Price.

As for the other half...

A red light coated the lab. An artificial voice began speaking nonsense about procedures. Before things could escalate, Damien swiped the access card through a nearby scanner, completely halting the ongoing emergency procedures.

Even if he hid his traces, he couldn't yet hide his presence completely. As long as he was physically present, a specialized system like this could notice him.

But that didn't matter anymore. As Damien scanned the access card, the floor of the lab opened horizontally, giving way to a descending staircase that looked ominous at just a single glance.

Without hesitation, Damien descended it. Regardless of the eerie atmosphere, this was exactly what he came to see.

"As expected, it's disgusting."

When Damien finally reached his intended destination, those were the first words out of his mouth.

It had to be known, after descending the staircase, he had to maneuver himself through what seemed to be an array of sewer tunnels before he could arrive at the large underground space that constituted the hidden lab.

If it wasn't for his All-Seeing Eyes' ability to see through all illusions, he'd have gotten lost in that sewer maze for eternity.

But now that he was here, frankly, he was underwhelmed. Because what he saw was exactly what he expected.

Countless rows and columns of 10-foot tall tubes filled with viscous liquid. Within that liquid were specimens of the experiment.

Some still retained some humanoid form, and some lost it entirely, becoming monsters. As for others, they were still comatose, yet to be used as experimental subjects.

"AHHHHHHHHH! PLEASE STOP!"

A distant scream of terror and pain rang out. Damien's gaze followed it, locking onto a sturdy metal door at the end of the hallway.

Most likely, past there was where the actual experimentation was done.

Damien pondered on it. The only concealment skill he knew was the one he borrowed from Zara, but this place was filled with bright light despite its dreary appearance, to traverse shadows to enter that room was impossible.

But it wasn't like he didn't have any other means. It was just that he didn't want to deploy these means at all, or even consider them means in the first place.

Yet, in the current moment, he had no choice. He needed to understand what was happening in that room.

Damien sighed and connected his consciousness to the Sanctuary, forcefully teleporting out a few specific beings.

Kyu?!

Kyu! Kyu!

Kyuu~

A small group of flickering green lights appeared in front of Damien. Naturally, these were some of the wind elemental spirits that formed along with the Sanctuary.

Kyu?

They looked at Damien as a collective, curiously circling around him.

But even as they did, Damien was sweating.

These elemental spirits were incredibly obedient. They viewed him as their creator, and would even directly kill themselves if he desired.

However, that didn't mean anything. There was a hidden danger in utilizing the elemental spirits in dangerous situations.

Even now, perfectly prepared to give them the order, Damien couldn't help but hesitate.

Could he face the consequences if one of them died? It was his neck on the line if they were injured in any way!

The problem was quite simple, yet infinitely complicated at the same time.

After all, these elemental spirits were little Xue'er's children. If one of them was so much as slightly injured, he'd surely meet his doom to her wrath.

Because Xue'er's wrath...was truly terrifying.

Chapter 512 Scent [2]

In the end, Damien still decided to use the elemental spirits. They were too important to his current goal.

The spirits created a network through which they could project the scene from within the room directly to Damien. This was the specific reason Damien chose the wind spirits.

But these particular spirits were better termed Air Spirits. Their capabilities far surpassed the wind.

The wind carried sound, and the air was a medium through which all else traveled. The only medium greater than it was space.

Therefore, these spirits could utilize their control to project both sight and hearing to Damien.

"Experiment #3758, failure."

These were the first words Damien heard. Accompanying them was a small screen in front of his eyes depicting an aged man and a young girl standing around a contraption meant to chain down test subjects during experimentation.

On that device was a naked man. Half his skin was gone, the other half turning inky black in color. His face was morphed into an eternal expression of terror that held even after he fainted.

"But he didn't die yet." The little girl inadvertently finished Damien's thought.

"It's true that he didn't die, but this rate of infection isn't nearly enough. Besides, look at his body. We cannot call this even a portion of the "perfect soldier" we are trying to create."

The little girl looked at the man's body and harrumphed. "Even if it looks deplorable, don't insult my creations like that. If it wasn't for the last step, would things have gone so wrong? We created artificial superhumans, we just can't conform them to the Lords' species properly."

The old man clicked his tongue and nodded. In reality, although this man's body was perfectly shaped like a human, he was a combination of various different beasts.

The arms of an ape, the legs of a cheetah, each section of his body was portioned off as such. But still, even with all the power they stuffed into him, he couldn't last the transfusion of Nox bloodline.

While the two researchers were lamenting, Damien was reeling in shock.

He wasn't surprised by the experiments, nor by the cruel scene of torture within the room. He wasn't surprised by the substance that was similar to the Death Seed Zara ate, nor was he surprised by the Nox's "perfect being" plan.

What surprised him was...

'Aren't they trying to create...me?'

Evolving by incorporating the strengths of beasts into his body, this was one of the core functions of his Void Physique. Being able to assimilate Nox bloodline without any injury was the same.

Oddly enough, Damien found that their so-called "perfect being" resembled not him, but...

'The Void Physique. They are trying to imitate the effects of the Void Physique.'

The second he realized it, his mind felt like bursting.

Until now, there wasn't a single person who knew about his physique. It was an utter mystery and no matter how much he searched, he couldn't find answers.

The only answers he had were the ones given to him by the physique itself.

This odd "being" that was like his other half, this physique that was his bane at the beginning, but his greatest helper from then on...

To think the first ones who held a clue about it were actually his fated enemies!

Damien almost wanted to curse his luck, but he knew his luck was far too good for him to resort to that.

'What do I do with this information? For one, I need to work even harder to hide the Void Physique. I can't become the Nox's number one target before I grow into my strength.'

'And after I finally have the strength I need...I can charge straight into their main world and ask them myself. At that time, who could possibly stop me?'

Damien recalled the wind spirits soon after. He had no need for their help anymore. The old man and little girl's conversation didn't take any interesting turns after that.

And so, Damien took his leave. Before the sun rose, he had four more assassinations to complete. He had no interest in delaying them and ruining his chances.

Evotech wasn't stupid. If all four vanished at once, they would investigate fiercely under the assumption that they were kidnapped.

However, if they vanished over a period of time, Evotech would be given the opportunity to retaliate. Each assassination would become harder than the last, and Damien might not be able to hide the fact that the researchers were being killed by someone on the inside.

Therefore, tonight was the night to strike. Afterward, he would focus on his own plan.

After Damien left the underground laboratory, the old man looked down at the little girl, and then back to the door that separates them from the containment area.

"Is he finally gone?" The old man asked. His tone was actually far more servile than it had been moments prior.

"Mm." The little girl responded coldly. "Though I still don't understand why we have to do this."

The old man smiled wryly. "You should already know, Young Miss. Although he hasn't made any large mistakes yet, he is slowly losing cautiousness. Would you rather he experience tragedy before learning his lesson?"

The little girl harrumphed and turned her head to the side. "Still, why me? Second brother or sixth sister would've been better for this job. Don't I look too out of place?"

"Pfft...!" The old man let out a chuckle. His young miss was still a child, after all. Only these small antics of hers would remind someone of this fact, considering her usually cold and uncaring personality.

"Did you forget? Currently, you are the only one able to reach this place. If the second young master could replace you, he would never have allowed you to come out alone."

"But you're here too, grandpa!"

"Aiii, am I truly here? Even I wonder about it sometimes." The old man chuckled mysteriously, causing the little girl to mock gag.

After this small stunt, the little girl returned to venting. At the same time, she walked up to the experiment subject and placed her small hand on his chest.

Greenish-white light sprung up from their point of contact. The heart-wrenching pain the test subject was feeling calmed quite a bit.

Once she was finished with some light healing, she immediately plunged her hand into his chest, piercing his heart.

But in the end, this was her way of showing goodwill.

The test subject couldn't move the muscles on his face, but the emotion in his eyes clearly revealed how relieved he felt to be dying.

While this took place, the old man gazed into the steel door. His gaze seemed to pierce reality itself as it searched for its target.

The old man sighed to himself. 'Mm. Such is the flow of all things. If fate permits, we shall meet again. Until then, grow steadily and do not disappoint me.'

With this thought, the old man vanished, leaving the little girl alone. Although she pouted, she seemed to have already known this would happen, so she didn't look too surprised.

As the little girl went back to casually playing on her personal device and Damien continued moving through his assassination missions, there seemed to be a small fact that they had forgotten.

In a quiet house that was empty despite being infested by guards, there was a bed where an individual once slept.

However, in their place, there only remained a small trace in the air.

A trace that only few could feel, and even fewer could pinpoint.

It was the infinitely small, yet still present, scent of the Void.

Chapter 513 Nodes [1]

In the deepest depths of the unnamed world on which Niflheim was built, the world that was once known as Asgard, a fierce wind blew.

It was a truly terrifying wind, a wind that could shred a peak 4th-class existence to pieces the instant it touched them. This powerful wind was blowing and creating large cave formations near the heart of the world.

But the movements were truly odd.

For many breaths, it would flow in one direction. And once that reached its peak, the wind would suddenly reverse, rushing just as fiercely in the opposite direction.

This cycle continued on and on, and if one observed it for long enough, they'd notice that it somewhat resembled...

Breathing!

The being whose mere breaths could kill peak experts awoke from its endless slumber. Even though its breath was traveling, no visage of a nose or mouth could be seen anywhere, nor could the being's eyes be spotted.

Regardless, it stood true that this being finally awoke. Its thoughts slowly adjusted to its new condition, its monstrous awareness spreading soon after.

But not a single being sensed its gaze.

'Hmm, has the seed that You planted finally blossomed?'

The being's gaze traveled to a certain bedroom. While those in Evotech would never notice anything wrong with this room, this being was naturally different.

'Hmm, it hasn't quite blossomed, but it is in partial bloom. No matter. This King has been slumbering for untold millennia, waiting a mere few months or years means nothing.'

The being couldn't help but smile. Somewhere on the world's surface, a mountain range imploded and turned into a valley.

'I have been awaiting you for so long, my little seedling. Keke, bloom to your full potential and spread your wings. Only then will you be ripe for my enjoyment.'

The labored breaths of that being slowly became restrained, the fierce winds calming down.

The being returned to its rest, eagerly waiting for its precious seedling to blossom.

Within Evotech Headquarters, the North and East Wings were meant for research-related buildings. Whether that be labs, workshops, forges, or anything else the researchers needed, it could all be found in these two wings.

As for the South Wing, naturally, it was the residential area.

The final wing was the West Wing, which was solely used for business and management-related jobs.

However, it was also the main office of Evotech's CEO and his closest aides. Whenever something came up that needed his attention, he could arrive in an instant.

Currently, such a situation was taking place.

It was the immediate next day after Damien's advent, and all four scientists had been found missing. Following this, Evotech Headquarters went on complete lockdown.

Massive barriers covered the entire headquarters. And it had to be known, the headquarters was a massive complex.

It housed hundreds of thousands of people at least. For this, the size needed to be at least that of a small city.

But this entire area, including the sky above it, was secluded from the outside world by a massive metallic dome.

Naturally, this wasn't merely a mechanical device. Mana coated every inch of the metal, both bolstering its defense and giving it the properties of lightning so any who attempted escape would be directly incinerated.

A fierce investigation was going to be performed from this moment on. There wasn't a single member safe from this. And for this occasion, the president himself was called in.

A man slowly appeared within the penthouse office of the main building. His hair was slicked back and jet black, his eyes a frightening shade of red.

"What's the situation?" He asked indifferently, not bothering with anything around him.

The secretary who was awaiting his arrival quickly gave him the rundown, to which he nodded without care.

"Very well. Carry on as you please. If you truly require my assistance, I shall aid you."

The president turned away from the secretary and sat at his desk. His eyes closed as if he was deep in thought.

Seeing him in this state, the secretary quietly sighed and left. When the president got like this, he would only return to reality when he desired to.

Instead of relying on his help, the secretary began putting together an investigation unit. Every member of the security force was immediately queued in to the situation as well.

While Evotech entered lockdown due to his actions, the man himself was pretending as if nothing happened.

After all, it was impossible to trace it back to him.

Damien Grey didn't have a spatial affinity, and Damien himself had an alibi for what he was doing that night.

As for what the alibi was...that was a story for another time.

Currently, Damien was sitting on the master bed with Aishia, his hands gently running across her wrists and fingers.

Despite the seemingly intimate actions, neither party looked aroused in the slightest.

In fact, while Aishia was trying to suppress her surprise, Damien's expression was that of utmost focus.

Small wisps of mana flickered from his fingertips and submerged into Aishia's skin. As Damien's hand moved across hers, he felt a strange sort of reverberation.

'What is this?'

When he asked Aishia if he could probe her mana utilization method, she had been more than just a little confused. But, Damien didn't quite know how to explain it without revealing everything about himself.

But, he did tell her about the Cloud Plane's meridians system. After all, this much was common knowledge.

And Aishia naturally didn't have meridians. She also confirmed that her method of mana utilization was indeed a more advanced version of what everyone in this world practiced, including those in Niflheim. Even if the structure was more complex, the base concept was the same.

Since the concept of meridians interested her, Aishia started to understand what Damien wanted to see from her. So in exchange for Damien allowing Aishia to probe his own Mana Circuit, he was given the opportunity to probe hers.

And to Damien...this was the best deal possible.

He hid his grin as he pushed more mana into Aishia's body. 'The Ananta Matrix is far more sophisticated than it was when I first met Master. Not only that, but the power difference between me and Aishia isn't nearly as great. If it's her, it shouldn't be a problem.'

Damien smiled slyly. He couldn't wait for her to probe him so he could try it out. But until then, he focused on what his senses were showing him.

"Strange!" Damien couldn't help but comment.

Meridians of the Cloud Plane, Mana Circuits of Apeiron, Mana Circles and Veins of Earth, and finally...

Nodes of Niflheim.

Aishia's circuit was best described as nodal. In actuality, there were no more than 12 places in Aishia's body where mana was concentrated.

Starting from her two ankles, next was both her knees. Her arms followed the same configuration, with a node on each wrist and elbow joint. Lastly, three nodes represented the three sections of her spine, and a final one sat at her nape.

"Could you move your mana for me?" Damien asked, far more politely than he had ever spoken before.

What he was doing was practically prying into her secrets, and while Aishia herself didn't seem to know, Damien would have a guilty conscience if he didn't at least show some courtesy.

Not understanding his complex emotion, Aishia simply followed what he said, mobilizing mana into her wrist.

Bzzt!

Blue flickering sparks of mana popped out of her wrist like firecrackers, but Damien didn't pay attention to their spectacle.

He was too fascinated by what he'd just seen.

Chapter 514 Nodes [2]

'It's so...unnatural!'

Damien didn't know how to explain it clearly. More than anything, the process looked incomplete.

Damien had to admit, the speed at which mana flowed into Aishia's wrist node was mind-boggling. Her mana was like streaking lightning the second it was mobilized, rushing through her body.

But she didn't actually have defined circuits to connect her body. Her nodes were strung together flimsily by small currents of mana.

Then, how did they achieve such an effect?

It took more time examining the node itself for Damien to understand the answer.

'This is a massive hub purely for amplification and casting speed. It's like a smaller, less refined version of my Mana Heart that's been granted offensive capability.

The idea was simple. Though the currents through which mana ran from one node to another were small, they were incredibly sturdy. The mana that traveled through it would be forcefully compressed by its size.

After that, the compressed mana would enter the node, and within an instant, it would be amplified and materialized, making that small current of mana into a large blast.

However, it didn't seem like Aishia had the capability to maintain this blast.

Damien very much wanted to ask her to attack him, but when he remembered the current situation, he realized that wasn't possible.

'For now, I'm just waiting for my turn. I should be in for at least a few rounds of torture, so it'll be best to mentally prepare myself.'

Even if Damien had a reasonable alibi, that didn't matter if his interrogators weren't reasonable in the first place.

Judging by the kind of research Evotech was doing, Damien didn't think they'd use any civil means for interrogation.

And frankly, even with his alibi, Damien was suspicious.

He just returned from the outside world, so if anyone had contact with a kidnapper or an assassin, it'd be him. It was likely Long Chen would be tortured as well.

Naturally, Damien already warned his friend about this, but Long Chen was just as resolute as him.

It might've seemed needless, but this interrogation and torture session meant a lot for their plans.

It was no small amount of information Aishia gave, and she was also a genuinely smart person. With Damien's judgement and hers combined, drafting up a rough plan in a few hours wasn't too hard.

'I need to gain their trust with this. If I can act as if I've been hiding my strength...'

Aishia had only the first goal in mind, but Damien was aiming for something else entirely.

After all, his main goal was still known only to him.

The time passed quickly, and when house lights finally began turning off for the night, Damien's guards sent three thundering knocks through his front door.

"Professor Damien Grey, please come with us." The one at the front said. He was a large dark-skinned man with a permanent scowl on his face. There was a large scar that ran from the top of his forehead down past his eyes and mouth, only stopping near his chin.

Damien "awoke" from his sleep with a confused expression on his face. "D-David? Can I help you?" He muttered with half-lidded eyes.

The man named David repeated himself. "Please come with us, Professor. There are many people who wish to speak with you."

"So late? What time is it?"

"The time isn't important, sir. These are very important individuals and they cannot be delayed."

After a bit more prodding, Damien finally seemed convinced. He quietly left the bed, so as to not wake Aishia, and equipped his clothing through his personal device.

Tidying up his hair and putting on his glasses, he followed the men out of the house, all the while hiding the traces of derision and mockery in his eyes.

It was only after a great deal of walking that they finally arrived at what looked like another lab. But after they entered, they descended down a staircase similar to the one in Aubrey Price's laboratory.

The underground space was connected to the same sewer system as before. It seemed to run below the entire headquarters. The room they arrived at after traversing the labyrinth, however, wasn't the same as the chimera research lab.

It was a small room that could at most fit ten people, but the inside was lined with torture tools of all kinds. In the middle of the room was an upright table on which the suspect would be chained.

"W-what is all this?" Damien questioned hesitantly. He didn't like what he was seeing at all. These didn't look like the tools of an important executive.

David shook his head. "This is where we part, Professor. I wish you good luck in your meeting."

"W-wait!"

Damien tried to stop David, but he and the other guards had already stepped out of the room. When the door closed behind them, it was immediately sealed and airlocked.

"My, my, you are quite the handsome one." An eerie voice came from behind him.

When he turned around, his eyes landed on an old woman around 50 or 60 years in appearance. Her wrinkled and saggy face was curled into a smile as she looked at him.

"What a shame, what a shame. To rip you apart would be a shame. Don't worry, dearest. When Big Sister is done with you, I'll put you back together and give you a sumptuous meal."

The old woman moved her body in what seemed to be a sensual manner, but the only thing of Damien's that rose was all the food he ate in the past rising up his throat!

But he was forced to hold down his vomit. It wasn't a good idea to anger the woman who'd be torturing him.

"M-ma'am, w-what am I doing here?" Damien asked timidly.

"Ah!"

The woman exclaimed as if she just remembered his presence. "To think I'd make such a simple mistake! Don't worry about a thing, dearest. Big sister will make sure you sleep nicely, and when you wake up, you'll be in wonderland."

The woman twirled in place, her body emitting a strange pink fog that dulled the senses. And as a natural reaction to foreign invasion, Damien's Void Physique moved into action.

But he instantly suppressed it.

At least while he was in Niflheim, he needed to suppress the Void Physique as much as possible. He didn't think he was slick enough to conceal himself from a Demigod.

With his Void Physique suppressed, Damien began succumbing to the numbing gas around him. His vision became hazy, his body became sluggish, and he collapsed onto the floor, the last thing he saw being the old woman's lustful smile.

Flash!

In the main building of the West Wing, a pair of striking red eyes flashed open. The man's head whipped to the side, peering through all physical things to see his target.

Unfortunately, the object he was seeking hid itself too fast. He wasn't able to completely pinpoint its location.

But at least he knew it was here.

'It's no fluke. The "seed" has finally arrived. However, will I become food for its growth, or will I be able to conquer it and make it mine? Haha, what an interesting game.'

The man's red eyes gleamed with the color of blood. Just the slightest bit of his bloodthirst was released, but that alone was enough to crumble the structures in his office.

'Hahaha, let us see. How will this seed grow, and how will I be pulled into it? Finally, I see a match worth gambling on.'

The man's eyes closed once more. For now, the seed could maintain its peace. It wasn't quite time for him to make his move yet.

Chapter 515 Witch [1]

By now, a little over 10 days had passed since Damien landed in Niflheim. At the same time, it had been roughly 8 days since the rest of the Sun and Moon Squadrons touched down.

During these 8 days, they had been thoroughly integrating themselves into Asgard. The Sun Squadron directly went to meet with Asgard's executives, taking their operations to the main headquarters of the organization.

As for the Moon Squadron, they had no interest in being so open. They settled down in a covert warehouse near the edge of Asgard territory.

Naturally, it would take more than a mere 8 days to completely set up operations, but with convenience artifacts like spatial rings, the task became much easier.

Within a certain office within the Moon Squadron Headquarters, Bai Xieren sat alone, pondering hard on something.

Bai Xieren wasn't going to lie to herself. When she landed, the first thing she did was assign Damien an absurd mission. Frankly, she was being a little petty. Even she recognized this, which was why she never specified a "time limit" for the mission.

By her expectation, Damien should have waited and patiently taken care of the targets over a period of time, engaging with utmost caution.

But this just went to show how little Bai Xieren actually knew about Damien. Her only impression of him was that he was extremely talented and cheeky.

This kind of character who sought to be free and unrestrained at all times was sure to go far in their path to strength, and this caused Bai Xieren to possess a somewhat good impression of Damien.

Yet, there was one thing she'd forgotten. The reason why she hated associating with these geniuses was precisely because they always had strange temperaments, not a single one of them being the same as the last.

Essentially, they were uncontrollable.

It wasn't even long after she gave the mission, a week at most when everything fell into chaos.

Evotech Headquarters suddenly entered high alert, completely isolating itself from the outside world. According to the frantic reports of spies that were sent through before communication was cut off, a number of important researchers had vanished overnight!

Naturally, even these spies had no idea what this news was about. Within the Sun and Moon Squadrons, only Bai Xieren was aware.

'That brat! Just what kind of trouble could he be causing?' Bai Xieren wondered inwardly.

When Tian Yang suggested she let Damien run wild in Niflheim, she accepted easily. She thought it would be nothing more than giving Damien a greater degree of investigative freedom.

How was she supposed to guess that Tian Yang was speaking literally?!

Bai Xieren felt a massive headache coming on. It had only been a week since they arrived in this world. They were barely through setting up base in Asgard, how could they have had time to send their spies out to infiltrate?

Now, Evotech was completely blocked off. The older spies that remained in the company didn't have access to the new AI technology, so contact with them was cut off.

The only allies they had on the inside were Damien, Long Chen, and some woman from Asgard that the executives brushed over.

But in the end, Damien was merely a 3rd class practitioner! No matter what kind of heaven-defying stunts he could pull, that didn't mean he had the ability to complete such a large task alone!

Bai Xieren was truly stumped, but her only option was to sit back and wait for Evotech Headquarters to open back up, hoping that Damien and Long Chen would maintain contact during that time.

"Haa..."

Damien let out a light breath as his consciousness returned to him. Immediately, a putrid stench assaulted his nostrils.

'How troublesome.' Damien commented inwardly. As he attempted to spread his awareness, he could clearly sense the shackles placed on him.

To an ordinary 3rd class, this level of constriction would completely limit their awareness. However, with Damien's mutated awareness, he could still see a relatively large area.

And indeed, he wasn't in the same torture room he was in when he passed out. Considering the old witch's twisted personality, it was probably only there to induce fear.

But Damien knew. The current almost empty torture room was far more terrifying.

"Kekeke~! You're finally awake, dearest?" The scratchy voice of the old witch entered his ears. Obviously, she'd been eagerly awaiting his awakening.

"Mm?" Damien rubbed his eyes, confused. When he noticed his almost naked body chained to a strange vertical table, his eyes widened in shock and fear. "W-where am I?!"

"Ehehehe!" The old witch laughed. Her face scrunched up in arousal. "Mm, mm! Keep doing that!"

"M-ma'am?" Damien hesitantly said.

The old witch's expression immediately became cold. "Little boy, didn't your big sister say that she would play with you? Why must you make it so difficult?"

The old witch flicked her finger, causing a small green beam to shoot into Damien's chest. Immediately, Damien felt the strange sticky substance submerging into his body.

But both the Void Physique and Transcendent Regeneration acted at once to rid the harmful substance from his body.

'No!' Damien instantly suppressed them. He couldn't show off this quickly, or things wouldn't go the way he wished them to.

The green substance continued to sink into Damien's body as he lowered his defenses. A terrible burning sensation spread the second it entered his system.

"AHHHHHHHHH!"

Damien screamed incredibly loud. To a researcher like Damien Grey, even this small level of pain was insanity-inducing. The only reason he and those like him were able to reach 3rd class was because Evotech forcefully raised them to that level.

"PLEASE STOP!!! AHHHHHHH!"

Damien continued to scream, bringing the old witch incredible pleasure. Her finger went to her lips as she tried her hardest to hold herself back.

But in the end, she wasn't able to do so. Her body jumped forward and arrived in front of Damien, her finger touching his refined abs and running down his body.

Along with her touch, the burning sensation became far worse. Damien's skin began to turn a strange shade of blackish-purple in the line her finger drew.

"AGGHHHHH!" Damien's breath became stuck in his throat, turning his screams into something akin to pained gurgles.

The old witch shivered uncontrollably. "Ahhh~ little boy, you are just how this big sister likes!"

The old witch had done her research. She was hired to do genuine work, after all. This Damien Grey, even while being a researcher, was genuine about keeping his body in shape.

Even though his muscles didn't pack the unbridled power a true 3rd class should possess, they were still refined and beautiful after so many stacked hours of practice.

The old witch continued to run her wrinkly hands along his body, spreading poison and other strange substances through his system. Although Damien couldn't identify them all, he could definitely sense the scent of an aphrodisiac in the mixture.

'This old bitch couldn't be thinking of...'

Damien almost vomited at that moment. If it weren't for the fact that he was squealing like a pig to keep up his facade, he truly would've done so.

But even if he held back his vomit this time, the old witch surely wasn't planning on letting him continue.

Her fun had only just begun.

Chapter 516 Witch [2]

The old witch's "fun" continued for many tens of minutes. By the end of it, Damien has already vomited multiple times.

But unexpectedly, the psychological torture that the old witch's lust inflicted on Damien felt far worse than the physical torture.

Considering how many unknown substances were rampaging in Damien's body at the moment, burning and melting his skin and muscles, the fact that he stood by his statement was a testament to how terrified Damien was of being raped by the old witch.

If the situation fell upon him, he'd no longer be able to keep up his facade. He'd immediately kill her before anything happened.

But luckily, it seemed the old witch was still somewhat aware of her priorities. After a particularly violent round of shivering pleasure, she let out a long sigh.

"Ahh, what a shame, dearest. I have to do my damn job, and I'm not allowed to break you. Be nice and answer my questions, will you?"

With a naturally twisted smile on her face, she injected another substance into his body.

"Dearest, this is a small truth serum I've invented. Can you tell me your name so I can see if it works?"

"Damien v-Grey."

Damien panicked for a second. By the time he comprehended her words, the old witch had already asked a question. If he hadn't immediately expelled the truth serum using his Void Physique, he would've slipped up.

But he acted quick enough. Although the first letter of his true last name began to leak, with how fast he switched, it sounded like a natural slip caused by how puffed up his face was at the moment.

After all, he was still being affected by tens of non-lethal poisons.

As expected, the old witch didn't notice his fumble at all. "Mm, mm. Can you tell me what you were doing last night?"

"I was having personal time with my wife."

"Tell me in detail what you did."

"First, I held her hand. I looked into her eyes and told her I loved her. After kissing her deeply, my hands moved up her waist to grab her..."

"Stop! Stop! Stop! How dare you mention that slut in front of your big sister?!"

The old witch directly cut him off by plunging her arm into his stomach, causing Damien to cough out a mouthful of blood.

"Ah! How careless of me! Forgive your big sister, okay? I was just a little jealous."

The old witch fed him a circular pill that quickly healed his stomach. Noticing how quickly she went about something, Damien realized something.

'No matter how cruel she is, she's terrified of the one giving her orders. That's why she's being so strict about 'not breaking me' and using truth serum instead of torture.'

Although it irked Damien that all the torture he endured was merely for the old witch's pleasure, it also relieved him that this interrogation would be finished off without a hitch.

From that point on, the old witch acted relatively professionally, asking him many more questions before concluding the interrogation.

From beginning to end, Damien answered flawlessly. His alibi and every other piece of information he could possibly need was being provided directly to his mind by Eve. His responses were just imperfect enough to seem normal.

Damien expected the same to be happening for Long Chen and possibly even Aishia. The only thing he was worried about was that truth serum would force their plans to go awry.

Until he met the two again, he could only wait. And in the meantime...

Damien released a portion of the shackles he placed on Transcendent Regeneration. Even then, his healing factor was substantial.

The odd discoloration of his skin began to fade, his swelling lessening. Through the many pores lining his body, thick and gunky liquid was excreted. This was the mixture of poisons injected into his body prior.

When the old witch noticed the ongoing process, she was stunned. Yet, when she looked at Damien, she found him unconscious from shock.

'This boy...has some hidden potential?'

The old witch immediately changed her attitude. With an incomparably serious impression, she sent a message to her direct superior, the Head of all military forces in Evotech.

'Sir, we have a situation. I might have found a useful seedling.'

At the same time, in another chamber, Long Chen was strapped to a vertical table not so different from Damien.

However, contrasting Damien, his body was covered in scars and gruesome wounds. His skin was flayed in places, his fingernails were entirely missing, and even a whole finger had been removed from his body.

His state was anything but healthy, but his eyes were resolute. With indignation coloring his tone, he squealed like a dying pig.

"Sir! Sir! You must release me! I have not a clue what you want from me! I'm innocent!"

"Tell me where you were and what you were doing last night." The interrogator said coldly. He was a burly man, the perfect image of a medieval executioner.

"I already told you, sir! I was within my Evo Genesis 360! I have no idea what you want!"

The executioner man frowned. By the information collected on Long Aotian, he did indeed have two Evo Genesis 360 gaming systems in his home.

These were the latest iteration of Evotech's virtual reality gaming console. Within the console, one would become entirely immersed in the game world.

Of course, harsher settings like pain and hunger could be toggled on and off, but if one wished, one could achieve a totally immersive virtual reality experience.

According to the information, this was exactly what Long Aotian was doing. Even the variety of surveillance around his home verified the same.

Yet, he still had to be questioned. He was related to Damien Grey and had accompanied him outside the facility. Until they confirmed the two hadn't contacted anyone untoward while they were outside, they couldn't let them go.

Damien had already flawlessly answered this question, and now it was Long Chen's turn.

Unfortunately, Long Chen was being mutilated regardless of what answer he gave.

But he only gritted his teeth and continued his act.

Even if he didn't have Damien's pain tolerance or regeneration, Long Chen was a formidable man in his own right.

Even though his status was that of the First Young Master of the Long Clan, he was by no means a sheltered young master. Long Chen always actively sought danger that would help him grow in strength.

He had already offended a large number of families, clans, and sects while on his escapades, but not a single person made a move against him.

Why? Was it because of his family background? Sure, that was part of the reason, but it was also his own strength.

Long Chen was a formidable sword cultivator. Even before obtaining the Empyrean Dragon Sword and awakening a portion of his Dragon Bloodline, he wasn't a character that could be easily touched.

The second he single-handedly stopped the Long Clan's internal conflict and rose to the position of Young Lord, all hostile gazes vanished from his body.

And as if karma was backing his righteous character, a large amount of the people he offended were killed in the Cloud Plane's purge.

Regardless of the past, the truth was that Long Chen wasn't the kind of person to bend to torture or force. Even if he was left a cripple without his four limbs, he could still heal himself with the pills provided by Bai Xieren before they left the Cloud Plane.

Therefore, Long Chen continued to endure brutal torture, his body becoming a mangled mess in the process.

It was only many hours left when he was finally bandaged up and sent back to his home.

In total, he lost 6 fingers, 17 teeth, large patches of skin, and much more. Yet, his gaze remained as steadfast and powerful as before.

His part in this plan...he'd completed it without fail.

Chapter 517 Summons [1]

When Damien "woke up" after "passing out from shock," he found himself in his own bed, Aishia's body plastered to his side as if she was truly a worried wife.

'Hmm, judging from the route they took to get me here...I was in the West Wing?' He thought inwardly.

Although the location of the torture chamber itself wasn't important, a location like that one would be in a place where many secrets were kept, so he kept a mental note of it.

Damien's awareness left his body and scanned over Aishia. 'She doesn't look harmed at all. Even if she was taken in for questioning, I doubt it was as severe as mine.'

In the first place, Aishia was mostly free from doubt. The only reason she needed to be questioned at all was because she was Damien's wife.

But since she didn't accompany him to the outside world, her direct involvement wasn't suspected at all. Instead, they must've hoped that Damien told his wife some secrets.

Yet, the researcher Damien Grey was clean. Even under truth serum, his story didn't seem out of place at all.

If they combined this with Aishia and Long Chen's testimonies, Damien's group would be completely freed of suspicion. Granted, as long as Aishia and Long Chen didn't encounter any problems.

If the ideal situation took place, he'd instead gain the interest of someone higher up in the social ladder. Damien was quite excited to see who this person would be.

'Finally, I'll get a chance to glimpse Niflheim's strength. I doubt anyone irreplaceable to Evotech wouldn't be part of their main circle.'

"Mm..."

As Damien lost himself in thought, Aishia's body began to squirm, rubbing against Damien's. To this, he could only smile wryly.

Even if it didn't look like much had changed, the "couple" was under constant surveillance in recent days. Because of this circumstance, they could no longer pretend during the day and relax at night.

The bed that Aishia used alone while Damien meditated on the floor was now being shared by the two as if they were truly lovers.

But since there were no feelings behind her embrace, Damien didn't feel too bothered by it. After dealing with Alea for months, he had become immune to this kind of accidental seduction.

'I need to go check on Long Chen. If the truth serum was used on him, I'm afraid things will go awry.'

Regardless, it was deep into the nighttime by this point. Anything Damien wanted to do had to wait until the next day.

So, Damien remained within his thoughts. Sleep was something only done for pleasure at his level of strength, so he would only do so after sorting out all his thoughts.

Most likely, Aishia wasn't asleep either. It was impossible for her to entrust Damien with her body when she was unconscious. They simply didn't have that kind of bond.

'That witch...why did she feel so different from Aishia?'

Damien was naturally referring to mana. Compared to the witch, Aishia's mana flow felt...incomplete.

'If she was able to reach 4th class and survive this hellish environment, it means she knows what she's doing. Otherwise, the Universe would never acknowledge her during Baptism.'

If so, there was only one valid reason remaining. Aishia was truly incomplete.

Regardless of the Mana Utilization Method, the circuits within one's body would always function like a machine. If a cog in that machine was removed, the efficiency of its workflow would be reduced.

But what was the metaphorical "cog" in Aishia's machine? What was different between her and the witch?

To answer these questions, Damien could only wait to either see Aishia in combat or witness other denizens of this world doing the same. Until then, he needed to be patient.

Patience. This was the main thing he needed during this mission. Even if he ran wild, his plans wouldn't be able to unfold immediately. It was the caveat of a Demigod's shadow.

Nevertheless, Damien could easily practice patience. He closed his eyes and entered a deep slumber, resting his mind and body that became weary after enduring so much torture.

As he drifted into unconsciousness, Aishia's eyes fluttered open. She looked at him with a complicated expression.

'How can you sleep so soundly?!' She wondered inwardly.

Not only was she a stranger, but she was also a stranger far more powerful than him. If he let down his guard, it wouldn't be hard at all for her to kill him.

Yet, he dared to sleep?

Aishia was confused in her heart. These past few days spending time with him, she came to realize that she couldn't understand Damien at all.

She was a person who did things step by step. She would carefully calculate her every movement so that there would be no mistakes. This way, her plans would always have high success rates.

But contrasting that was the man she met last week. A man who brazenly did whatever he wanted, but still firmly moved to reach the proper conclusion.

But how was he able to have confidence in himself to do so when he introduced so many variables into his plans?

How did he maintain control in such chaos?

While Aishia's original goal in joining Damien's side was to enter Niflheim and at least somewhat hinder their operations, she found herself rapidly changing her mind.

She wanted to see the end of Damien's path in this world. She wanted to see how he managed to reach the conclusion he desired while moving so recklessly.

And most of all, she had a feeling...

She realized that Damien didn't even think to set a small goal like "hindering" Niflheim through Evotech. He didn't care about the small things.

Those were all eventualities that would happen regardless of how he moved. If he was going to mess with them regardless, why plan for it?

Instead, his plan was far grander. Judging by the grand entrance he made within mere days of beginning his mission, Aishia began to see a shadow...

The shadow of a man who could truly destroy this corrupt organization.

When her thoughts reached this point, Aishia found herself violently shaking her head. 'What am I thinking? How can I place such hopes in a small 3rd class brat?'

But even as she tried to convince herself, she couldn't. Looking at the sleeping face of the handsome man next to her, she sighed.

'Just who are you, and why are you able to affect me so much?'

It was another question Aishia asked herself many times. But it was also another question she couldn't answer. She found that curiosity was truly a poison to the mind.

But in the end, she was able to shake off all her stray thoughts. Regardless of her personal desires and beliefs, her mission came first.

And if her heart felt like trusting this man would allow her to complete it...

She didn't mind offering him anything. If her life was enough to guarantee the destruction of Niflheim, she'd personally put her head on a stake and offer it.

Aishia closed her eyes and followed Damien's example. Instead of thinking about things that hurt her brain, she'd rather just sleep and follow the flow.

It was completely different from the path she usually took. She felt like she was just being lazy in carrying out her duty.

But at the same time, it was a strangely nice feeling that she didn't hate at all.

Chapter 518 Summons [2]

When morning dawned, the first thing Damien did was go directly to Long Chen's residence to check up on him.

Research operations were temporarily ceased during investigation, so Damien didn't have any work to do anyway.

But this ceasing was most likely just on the surface. It only applied to ordinary researchers like Damien who "didn't know" about Evotech's dark side.

As for projects like the Chimera research or Core Extraction, they were likely still in development.

Regardless, when Damien stepped through the portal, he found himself in a relatively large studio apartment.

Damien was currently in the large living room. Connected to this room was the kitchen, with the front door of the apartment also being accessible.

Directly in front of him, there was a hallway where Long Chen's bedroom, bathrooms, and guest bedroom were located.

And on the left was an entire wall made of windows that overlooked the skyline of Evotech headquarters. If it wasn't for the other buildings polluting the view, it would've been truly beautiful.

As for the reason why Long Chen lived in an apartment building, it was simple. He was single, had no family, and worked as an assistant.

There were many like him even among the researchers, people who didn't have lovers or family to bring with them. For these people, did Evotech need to waste precious land providing individual housing? They didn't need that kind of space.

Instead, they built large apartment buildings for these people to live in, creating a city-like aesthetic that didn't match the suburban aesthetic of the location where Damien lived at all.

'Then again, Aubrey Price also lived in a house, but she was single with no family. Perhaps her status granted her special privileges.'

As Damien thought random thoughts, his feet led him through the apartment naturally as if he'd walked through the place dozens of times already. Reaching the bedroom at the end of the hall, Damien loudly banged on the door.

"Wake up, Aotian! What's taking you so long?"

Even while acting in a seemingly rude manner, Damien still spoke politely. This was merely his respect for his friend shining through. At least between Damien Grey and Long Aotian, there was no need for pretenses.

But unlike what he expected, he didn't hear any response to his antics. Even when Damien hit the door hard enough to alert the neighbors, Long Chen didn't open it.

With furrowed brows, Damien kicked open the door, breaking it off its hinges. And when he did...

'Those little fuckers actually...'

He felt a smoldering rage building in his chest. In front of his eyes laid a broken Long Chen, his body wrapped in bandages and missing many parts.

They didn't even bother to heal him the same way they healed Damien. It was clear how little Evotech valued the lives of research assistants.

But Damien didn't care about any of that. When he saw Long Chen's state, he could hardly stop himself from destroying everything immediately.

"Aotian!" He exclaimed in shock, rushing to the bedside. His hands gripped Long Chen's shoulders as he attempted to wake him.

"Aotian, wake up! Answer me!"

Damien kept yelling for many minutes before Long Chen finally groggily opened his eyes. It turned out that he was merely knocked out by anesthetics.

"Aotian! What happened to you?!" Damien asked worriedly after Long Chen adjusted to his current circumstance. At the same time, he sent a mental transmission with a completely different tone.

'Who did this to you?'

The question was still the same, but Damien's voice was incomparably cold.

No matter how much Damien dogged on Long Chen and bullied him, no matter how much pleasure he derived from annoying him, that didn't change the fact that Long Chen was his sworn brother.

Damien was just terrible at expressing his emotions properly. And at the same time, with their battle-hardened friendship, he didn't have to worry about Long Chen misunderstanding his intent.

This kind of brotherhood was far purer and less complicated than a romantic relationship.

Long Chen was one of the few people Damien viewed as a companion. Even though they hadn't actually fought side by side many times, Damien knew he'd have no problem leaving his back to Long Chen.

Because that was the kind of person Long Chen was.

Trustworthy, stalwart, and loyal. No matter how much Damien seemed to annoy him on the surface, Long Chen would always stand by his side even in the most trying times.

This much could be seen even from the current circumstances alone.

Hearing the chill in Damien's voice, though, actually warmed Long Chen's heart. Feeling the barely suppressed killing intent emanating from Damien's body made him feel validated.

'Indeed, brothers will fight and quarrel, but at the end of the day, they are still brothers. This bond is a promise of lifetime friendship and loyalty.'

Knowing this, Long Chen sighed and came clean about what happened during his interrogation. He didn't plan to hide it from Damien anyway.

And hearing how Long Chen was mercilessly tortured only furthered Damien's fury. With his hands still gripping Long Chen's shoulders, Damien covertly poured green-colored essence into his friend's body.

[Heal]

The trait activated, but with nowhere near the same strength it had when Damien first used it. For the sake of secrecy, he could only be slow and steady in the process.

"Rest up. With the life essence I've left in your body, healing to peak condition won't be a problem. However, it will take some time. I can't heal you immediately lest they get suspicious."

Long Chen nodded in agreement. He also knew the plan they thought up. At the moment, Damien Grey was a man who didn't know his own talents. His healing factor was something that'd only blossom later.

Along with it, Long Chen's battle talent would also be revealed.

This way, Long Chen would infiltrate the military while Damien would get further engrossed in the research side, perhaps even becoming a test subject for some important experiments himself.

And with this, their range of motion would broaden considerably.

However, all of this would come later. Now came a time of rest and recuperation while Evotech continued to interrogate its employees.

Thinking about how many people would endure inhumanity during this juncture made Damien shiver. It was his fault after all. But at the same time, he could only accept this.

He was essentially sacrificing the less for the many. As long as the "less" didn't include people he cared about, Damien had no reservations about doing this.

As if waiting for Damien's thoughts to reach this point, a portal appeared in Long Chen's living room. From it arrived a man with an incredibly imposing demeanor.

His skin was dark, his hair trimmed into a buzz cut. He stood at a whopping 8 feet in height, vastly outclassing both Damien and Long Chen.

The man scanned the apartment building before locating the two. When he did, he opened his mouth.

Without bothering to actually come face to face with the two, he roared with vigor.

"Professor Damien Grey and Long Aotian, by the decree of General Strohman Weiss, you have been summoned to the Armament Hall!"

Chapter 519 Summons [3]

Damien's eyes widened in curiosity. Although he was expecting a summons, he didn't expect it to be to the Armament Hall!

The Armament Hall was a facility located in the North Wing of Evotech Headquarters. In fact, most military facilities were located in this wing even though it was mainly used for research buildings.

Of these military facilities, the Armament Hall's purpose was the simplest. It was the storage for Evotech's weaponry and the place where soldiers went to get equipped

Still, even with its simple function, it wasn't a place just anyone could enter. Even for the exemplary soldiers of Evotech, the Armament Hall was a dreamland.

The weapons they usually used were stock weapons that were mass-produced, but the weapons in the Armament Hall were unique and leagues more powerful than anything they could hope to get.

But the only way to enter it was to stack up military achievements.

However, Damien and Long Chen were currently being summoned to this illustrious hall without doing anything to prove their worth.

And the only reason one went to the Armament Hall was for weapons.

'Strange. Even if they became aware of our "potential" during the interrogations, they shouldn't let us into the Armament Hall. We haven't built any trust yet.'

But even while thinking like this, Damien couldn't justify the reasoning behind the summons. Instead, he picked up Long Chen and put him in a nearby wheelchair, rolling him out to the living room to meet the man enacting the summons.

"Sir, as you can see, my assistant is severely injured. As for me, I am a mere researcher. How could I dare enter the Armament Hall?"

These were the first words Damien said. It had to be known, Damien Grey had quite the contrasting personality.

He was strong-headed yet weak-willed. If his research was involved, he'd fight to the last man, but otherwise, he was the greatest coward.

Showing hesitation like this was the best course of action. This way, they'd keep him in research and not abuse his regeneration on the battlefield.

After all, just as Damien's regeneration would make him a good test subject, it'd also make him a great meat shield.

Damien smiled wryly at his own thoughts. 'This plan is quite masochistic. How annoying.'

The big man finally spoke up, ignoring Damien's previous question entirely. "Hmph! You do not have the qualifications to question the General's summons. Follow me or accept punishment!"

"Y-yes!" Damien replied timidly, quickly rolling Long Chen and following the big man through the portal.

Just like that, they arrived in front of the Armament Hall.

It wasn't a large building by any means. It was a simple one-story building with an all-white aesthetic, a pair of sliding doors serving as its entrance.

But to enter, one needed a level of authority that very few within Evotech possessed.

Ding!

As if sensing their arrival, the doors opened without a hitch, letting Damien's group inside. At the same time, the big man turned around and left.

Damien hesitantly walked into the Armament Hall, but all he found was an empty room. The only thing present was a single man.

"Are you Professor Damien Grey?" He asked coldly.

His gait wasn't nearly as large as the big man from before, but his imposing momentum was far greater. Whether it be his face, arms, or any other exposed part of his skin, it was all covered in gruesome scars that highlighted the many battles he'd gone through.

"Y-yes, General! This one is called Damien Grey, and the one in front of me is my assistant Long Aotian."

The general nodded noncommittally. "Mm, follow me."

He turned around and began walking without another word, forcing Damien to follow him. Like this, the trio walked aimlessly for many minutes through a winding hallway that didn't seem to fit the size of the building at all.

Finally, after many minutes, they arrived in a small connected room. As the general began fiddling with a nearby keyboard, he finally spoke to Damien.

"Professor Grey, I will be honest with you. You don't possess even a hint of the qualifications necessary to come here. The only reason you've been allowed to do so is because of a certain individual's suggestion."

Damien's brow raised curiously. Someone recommended him? If he looked at it from the most obvious standpoint, there was an Asgardian spy among Evotech's executive board, but would things be so simple?

If this was Asgard's work, they were being far too blatant. Giving him access to the Armament Hall was practically proclaiming him a spy.

But if it wasn't Asgard, who else would want Damien to be equipped with weaponry? And what was their goal in armoring him?

Damien's brows furrowed. His goal was the rapid destruction of Niflheim, but the relationships between forces, and even the forces themselves, of this world were far too twisted.

Damien knew that if he did things normally, not just a mere 6 months or year, it'd take many years to unravel the situation.

'I don't have that kind of time...should I be reckless?'

Being reckless and direct was Damien's strong point. Even though he'd begun to plan his movements more carefully, he couldn't change the core of his personality.

But before he could decide, the general finished inputting what he needed and turned around.

"The reason for your entrance into the Armament Hall is simple. From now on, you will need methods of self-protection in case anything untoward happens. However, usage of your chosen weapon will be strictly monitored by Evotech, so don't even think about trying anything funny."

As the general spoke, the floor below them began to sink, taking them down with it. Its pace was slow, acting as a sort of elevator.

The trio descended for many minutes before finally, the floor stopped sinking. The four walls that surrounded them during the entire descent sunk into the floor, revealing the scenery that was once hidden.

'This...!'

Damien's eyes widened in shock. In front of him was an array of weapons more massive than anything he'd seen before. And not only that, the types of weapons were also completely new.

Even ordinary swords and spears were equipped with technology, having blades that shimmered with blue holographic light. But even with this enhancement, these weapons were far too commonplace to shock Damien.

What shocked him...were the guns.

Rifles, pistols, snipers, machine guns, whatever it may be, it was present. The weapon that was present in the greatest quantity was the gun.

'How does one use a gun when mana allows one to destroy cities and planets with a single thought? What is the benefit?'

Damien was itching with curiosity. Seeing this kind of familiar modern weapon after so long filled him with a strange sense of nostalgia.

"You may pick any single weapon from the storage. Once you have decided, return back to me to be assigned your tasks."

The man named Strohman was one of few words. After saying his piece, he moved off to the side and closed his eyes, no longer paying attention to the Damien and Long Chen duo.

As for the duo, naturally, they were excited. While Damien wanted to test out how the guns worked, Long Chen, this avid sword fanatic, wanted to dive into the sword racks and kiss every masterpiece he saw.

Unfortunately, he was currently wheelchair-bound. He could only restrain himself and wait for Damien to take him to the swords.

But since when was Damien such a kind person?

Without giving a single thought to Long Chen, he rushed over to the gun racks.

Chapter 520 Summons [4]

Damien's eyes panned over the large assortment of armaments in front of him. He couldn't help but marvel at the aesthetic choices of these weapons' makers.

Each firearm was domineering in its own right. The sniper rifles and other larger weapons looked as if they could easily take chunks out of the earth.

They were extremely tempting. Especially considering the fact that Damien was using Earth standards to judge them, he couldn't even imagine how powerful they truly were.

Unfortunately, these weapons didn't suit him. He was a close and mid-ranged combatant, so long-range weapons like snipers wouldn't work for him.

At the same time, he was a person who focused more on destructive power than speed. Because he could easily teleport, speed was never his concern.

And because he would constantly teleport, a weapon that specializes in rapid-fire capabilities wouldn't suit him either.

But that didn't mean rapid-firing capabilities weren't useful to him. If he could, he'd prefer a weapon that could do both rapid-fire and burst attacks.

His requirements must've been far too steep, however, since he couldn't find anything that suited him. Luckily, he didn't take too much time since each weapon came with a holographic window that roughly outlined its pros and cons.

Damien walked to the end of the shelf. At this point, the weapons in front of him were mainly pistols and other smaller guns.

'Haa, pistols are small and sleek enough to fit my requirements, but can they match up to what I'm envisioning?'

Truthfully, he thought they could. But he didn't have any knowledge on this type of weapon. His thoughts were all hypotheticals made with his information-less mind.

Still, it didn't look like General Strohm was going to help him. And on top of that, he couldn't keep Long Chen away from the sword rack for too long.

He could clearly see the other party practically salivating in his wheelchair.

'I'll have to pick the one that matches closest to what I'm thinking of...but will he let me?'

Damien's eyes moved to a location free of any other firearms. It was a glass case with two pistols inside.

One was a sleek metallic black while the other was a contrasting silver. Underneath the case, there was a plaque stating the weapons' names.

Twin Moons.

Named after the twin moons that hung in the world's sky, the black pistol was Hel and the silver was Freya.

'Asgardian mythos has a significant impact on this world. I originally thought Niflheim simply copied Asgard, but I might be wrong.'

Although the names he had heard so far didn't have any connection with the actual myths, their influence was still strong.

After all, his "wife" was a Valkyrie.

He had to wonder where these legends came from, to be able to spread across many planets like this. He also had to wonder about Earth's origins once again. How could a mere beginner world be so influenced by the wider universe?

Damien shook his head. The mystery of Earth was something he realized long ago, but as he traversed the universe, he came to understand that the answers he sought weren't there.

At least, not in Sector 3.

Instead of thinking about questions he'd answer far in the future, Damien removed the glass casing and took the twin pistols into his hands.

'Ah, what a nice feeling.' He couldn't help but inwardly comment. It felt like the grips were adjusting to his hands perfectly.

Only when Damien picked up the Twin Moons did General Strohm open his eyes again. But after only glancing for a few moments, he returned to his original posture.

Seeing this, Damien sighed in relief and put the Twin Moons away in his spatial ring. After that, he accompanied Long Chen to the sword racks.

While Long Chen experienced the orgasmic bliss of otherworldly swords, General Strohm was submerged in inner thoughts that completely betrayed his outward appearance.

'The Twin Moons?! They actually allowed a mere professor to wield them?!'

His thoughts were truly chaotic. It had to be known, weapons of the Twin Moons' level of quality had almost all been claimed already. If an exemplary soldier appeared who was deserving of such high-class weaponry, it would be forged directly for him.

But the Twin Moons were different. General Strohm vividly recalled the old folktale that had been passed on through generations of soldiers.

Originally a pair of manaless weapons that existed before the Mana Advent, the pistols were abandoned by their master and left in an unknown corner of the world.

Years passed. The dual weapons sat unnoticed for ages. By all means, these ordinary weapons should've rusted and deteriorated hundreds of years ago, but the esoteric concept of miracles exists for a reason. No matter how much time passed, the pistols remained in pristine condition.

And at some point, they began absorbing mana. The pistols' color changed, turning from a more camo-like color to an iridescent blue that mirrored the mana it absorbed.

But when this change wasn't allowed to last for long. One fateful day, tens of thousands of years ago, the single moon in the sky split into two halves.

A dark moon that was almost completely black, melding into the night sky. If it wasn't for the stars behind it that cast a shadow of its silhouette onto the world, even the denizens wouldn't have known of its existence.

As for the other, it was a glistening silver. It shone with light rivaling the sun using its own power, granting the night sky a strong power of yin.

Perhaps, the moon splitting told of a new era. The world was bathed in two contrasting auras for three days and three nights after the event.

And during that baptism, the pair of dual pistols absorbed the energy of the two moons, mirroring their images and gaining sentience.

The Twin Moons had only been found by Evotech with pure luck. But after finding such a good weapon, how could they not try to take advantage of it?

Truthfully, many masters had attempted to control the Twin Moons, but the weapons simply wouldn't listen.

They were already at the pinnacle of Chaos Rank weapons, so when they resisted, it was impossible for anyone to conquer them by force.

Therefore, they had been placed in the Armament Hall for chosen soldiers to try their luck. It became a sort of ritual to attempt to conquer the Twin Moons before choosing a true weapon.

But now, in front of the general's eyes, a small researcher with a timid personality easily picked up the Twin Moons without even a shred of resistance.

Judging from the man's expression, he didn't even know the significance of what he just did.

General Strohm's curiosity was piqued. If he was picked as the Twin Moons' master, he wouldn't be a simple character at all. Perhaps...

General Strohm shook his head. Even if he had some kind of amazing talent, there was no way he was a hidden powerhouse. Infiltrating Evotech's system wasn't easy at all.

But still, General Strohm was forced to make a mental note.

About the future achievements of this currently nameless researcher, he was both a little excited and a little fearful.

All he knew for certain was that times were changing, and the raging storm on the horizon was infinitely close to enveloping them all.