

# Void 521

## Chapter 521 Twin Moons [1]

After Damien picked up the Twin Moons, he and Long Chen didn't stay in the Armament Hall for long. After Long Chen received his sword as well, the two quickly left.

But before they left, they received their new assignments from the General. And it was just as they expected.

Long Aotian's unbending self that was hidden behind a cowardly exterior, and Damien Grey's special body, they had both been properly recognized by the executive board. Once again, the duo would be separated.

Long Chen would be sent to train with the military, and as for Damien...

'It's exactly what I wanted but who knew it'd come so soon.' Damien grinned to himself. Looking at the holographic briefing sheet, he was overjoyed.

[Damien Grey - Transfer]

[Division - Biochemical Engineering]

[Guarantor - Lynn Carter]

There was far more information on the sheet, but just this much was enough. But when Damien thought about it, this was a natural course of events.

Damien had shown off his regeneration specifically. If there was a department that could make full use of his regeneration abilities, wouldn't it be the one that made Chimeras?

However, Aubrey Price was now dead, leaving only Lynn Carter at the head of the Chimera Research...

While also being an important member of the Core Extraction research as well.

'I don't know why she went to Earth, but I'm assuming it was to test their theories on a more insignificant world before using it on their target. Regardless...'

He didn't know how many worlds had been destroyed through their actions, and he had no desire to find out.

Currently, there was only one thing Damien wanted to know about.

Bzzt!

The Twin Moons in his hands vibrated fiercely as his mana entered their bodies. With Hel on the left and Freya on the right, Damien stood stationary and continued the process.

He stood in an isolated area of the Sanctuary as he did so. Although slipping away was far harder with the current circumstances, it wasn't entirely impossible for Damien.

It just took an excessive amount of work.

But for the sake of Damien's curiosity, this level of work was nothing.

Voom!

As the Twin Moons absorbed more and more mana, they began to shine with iridescent light. The rays of light spread, bouncing off any nearby surface as if it was a mirror and forming a sort of prism.

At the same time, two clear gems separated from the pistols' bodies, gently floating over Damien's wrist.

And then, they plunged downward and submerged into his skin, searing themselves into his body and becoming a part of him. Despite the process, it didn't actually cause Damien any pain.

Bzzt!

The two clear gems were slim ovals only 2 or 3 inches long, shaped somewhat similarly to eyes. They were submerged with half their bodies burrowed in Damien's wrists. The two points of the oval were facing Damien's wrist and elbow, aligning the ovals parallel to Damien's arms.

But after burrowing there, they began emitting sparks of electricity. When Damien felt the mana entering the Twin Moons, he noticed that there was a large delay in between the time of him feeding the mana and the Twin Moons digesting it.

It was almost as if...

'Something is blocking the flow.'

Damien realized it immediately. Since he'd been pondering on the question for many days, the answer came naturally to him.

Damien's awareness entered his body and traveled to his wrists. There, he saw two marble-sized "meridians" that were built into Damien's Ananta Matrix. And partially fused to these meridians were...

The very same gems that just burrowed themselves into Damien's body.

He understood now. He understood why Aishia felt incomplete while the witch was different. He understood why the entire concept of Nodes didn't match his expectations.

Because Nodes were truly incomplete. The Nodal Mana System wasn't created to use mana the way everyone else used it. No, it was meant to be used with an external medium.

Damien curiously played with the two meridians in his wrist, as well as the ones present in other Nodal Points. With a single thought, he drew all his mana into these 12 points, completely changing the structures of his meridians and integrating the concept of "Nodes" into his Ananta Matrix.

The process took many hours to complete, but it was less time than Damien expected. Compared to the past, he was now far more adept at precision mana control. This kind of task wasn't nearly as tiring as it used to be.

Naturally, that was only because of the Ananta Matrix. If not for its unique property to evolve, making even minor adjustments to the Mana Circuit's path would be a task fraught with danger.

Nevertheless, Damien was able to complete the modification successfully, and when the oval gems met with his newly improved "Nodes," they went wild.

The mana from his body was wildly sucked into the gems, while at the same time, ambient mana rushed into his body to make up the difference. Still, Damien didn't panic.

He understood what this process was. "Nodal Linking" was exactly the process in which denizens of this world "completed" their mana systems.

The color of those clear gems slowly turned to that of ink, and then an even darker blackness. This blackness was dark to the point of clarity, causing the gems to take on a clear black glass look.

Damien frowned. According to what Eve told him, the gems would change color according to his mana. This black was either representing Space or his Void Essence, but regardless it was no good.

After all, if either was revealed it'd be dangerous for him.

But now that the gems had changed color, there was nothing he could do. The Nodal Link had been completed, the Twin Moons being bound to him for eternity.

For denizens of this world, their weapon was quite literally a part of their body. Some even valued their weapons more than their own wives and children.

But weapons and people had compatibility. Even when a weapon had no sentience, its compatibility with its wielder was still important. This was one of the drawbacks of the Nodal Linking System.

If one linked with the incorrect weapon, one would be hard-pressed to become a true powerhouse. Although Unlinking was also an available option, it was far too expensive for the common person.

Because of this, most of Niflheim and Asgard's armies were made up of weak soldiers who couldn't reach a desired synchronization rate. As for someone like Damien...

Voom!

His weapon chose him, so how could the synchronization rate be low? As Damien felt his mana smoothly circulate between his body and the twin pistols, he felt incomparably calm. This kind of perfectly melded feeling was blissful and addicting.

But an even more addicting feeling was what followed. Damien had no idea how to use the guns in his hand, but he simply went for it. Aiming it at some nondescript corner of the room, he pulled the trigger.

Xiu!

There was a sound of something whizzing through the air, and in the next instant, a plot of land roughly ten meters across entirely disappeared from the world.

On the other hand, Damien looked shocked. Although the damage he did wasn't much, that was because he barely put any mana into his shot.

What shocked him was...

Chapter 522 Twin Moons[2]

It was almost like teleportation.

When Damien pulled the trigger, it all happened in an instant, far too fast for such an intensive process.

The trigger being pulled was a catalyst. The black gems in Damien's wrists lit up, sucking in Damien's mana like a vortex. This mana was then circulated through the gem itself, being compressed and concentrated multiple times over.

Only when this process ended would the mana enter the gun. As for the process, even Damien couldn't quite understand how the mana went from the gems to the guns. The only thing he could sense was that there was some sort of connection between the four objects similar to Damien's Celestial Mana Threads.

Regardless, the "bullet" was transported into the gun's chamber and propelled forth using mana conceptually mirroring a ray gun.

Essentially, the bullet itself was heavily compressed spatial mana that would cause both splash damage and direct damage. It was a marvelous wonder of science and magic combined into one.

Damien pondered over it for a bit, and then decided to send off a few more shots. He wanted to test if there was something special about the Twin Moons that left it separated from the main weapon racks.

Unfortunately, he couldn't seem to find the difference. Either that, or the weapon itself didn't want him to find it. Whatever the reason, Damien's search was futile.



However, as weapons, the Twin Moons were spectacular. The immediate compression and amplification of mana through the Nodal Gems were phenomenal, much faster than if the process was attempted by human hands.

Not to mention, the Nodes themselves were integral in allowing the firearms to show their true power. The simple and inelegant shape and positioning of the Nodes allowed an extremely rapid system to be created.

Mana would bounce between his Wrist Nodes and the Central Node on his nape, hastening with each revolution until its momentum was enough to tear everything to shreds.

Though, using the Twin Moons only created a feedback loop through three nodes. Damien understood that there were many more ways the denizens of this world utilized their strange mana system than simply firing weapons.

Nevertheless, Damien soon left the Sanctuary and covertly re-entered his home, nodding in greeting to Aishia entering his study.

He sat down on his fanciful chair and fell into thought, continuing what he couldn't finish at the Armament Hall.

The question was simple.

'Should I be reckless?' Damien didn't know. He was having a hard time deciding on it.

His hesitation came from one main thing, the fact that everyone else who came on this mission with him would be endangered. If he couldn't finish within 6 months, even Rose and Ruyue would be caught up in the aftershocks.

But if he could finish within 6 months...

Damien peered through the wall at his "wife," his eyes indifferent.

'This woman wants Niflheim to be brought down. Although her desire is just, it isn't enough. I'm afraid Asgard has been corrupted since long ago.'

The longer he stayed in this world, the easier it was to realize. Especially as he heard about the world's past through Aishia, it was easy to see. It was also easy to see how Aishia herself had been indoctrinated.

Asgard was not an ally. Damien had no proof of this, but he was sure of it. But he also knew that if he never discovered the harmful nanomachines that entered his body along with the AI Core Processor, he never would've realized the small details he could now see with ease.

'Destroying Niflheim isn't enough. If it comes down to it, I'll have to destroy the entire world.'

Thinking about all the innocent lives that'd be lost irked him, but he couldn't do anything about it. He simply didn't have the power to save them.

With this in mind, Damien returned to his mundane daily routine. That day, he came to a decision that would heavily impact his future.

As for what that decision was...?

That was a story for another time.

\*\*\*

3 days passed quickly, and soon enough, it was time for Damien to return to work. With his reassignment, he was no longer allowed to casually rest.

Although Damien wanted to know about what was going to happen to the Treasure Duplication research, he realized that the big men who always led him around would never answer his questions when he needed them to.

Instead, he found himself in a different lab. It had an overall neat appearance, with not nearly as many random objects and machines strewn around as Damien's lab.

In a quiet corner, a blonde woman clacked away on the holographic keyboard in front of her, seemingly inputting the results of some test.

As for Damien, he was forced to stand in another corner of the room and watch this happen. He had already been present for half an hour, yet Lynn Carter hadn't acknowledged his existence.

Frankly, Damien was getting a bit annoyed. Although he didn't have a problem waiting, that only applied to things he cared about. For someone as trivial as Lynn Carter, Damien had no patience.

"Kuhum, excuse me," Damien spoke. The only response he got was silence. Even the clacking of a keyboard didn't break this awkward silence because the keyboard itself was holographic. It was the first time Damien cursed technological advancement.

"Excuse me!"

This time, he wasn't so kind. He sent a trace of mana into his voice, his volume causing nearby beakers to rattle.

"What do you want?" Lynn Carter finally turned to him and coldly asked.

Frankly, she had no interest in the researcher that had been brought in as her assistant. No, not even an assistant, he was put in a similar position to Aubrey Price.

But it was merely a puppet position. Someone like Damien Grey who didn't even know about Evotech's shadow would never be given such an important role.

Even his position on the Treasure Duplication project was only provided to him because his wife was overlooking it. As for his wife, wasn't she one of the most important members of the executive board?

Last time Lynn Carter saw the woman named Aishia, she didn't even have close to enough status to interact with her. She could only watch from afar.

But that Aishia woman was incredibly arrogant and domineering, suppressing those who didn't follow her will exactly. Perhaps this was the reason why Lynn developed a grudge against Damien, despite his innocence in the matter.

Naturally, Damien didn't know any of this backstory. He was forced to endure the undeserved grudge in silence.

"Um...aren't I here to assist you in your research? I don't think having me stand here pointlessly will help with that at all."

Lynn looked back at him with derision. "What help could you possibly provide? The only reason you got this far was because of your wife."

Damien's temper flared. His research and his wife, these were the two things Damien Grey didn't accept any bullshit on. But not only did Lynn insult his research, but she'd also insulted his wife's honor!

Damien was truly riled up. Without thinking about the consequences, he let off a slew of curses, sternly lecturing Lynn Carter.

"...do you understand?! Even if you've been valued by Evotech, you are merely one of many! Do not look down on other people's efforts like pathetic scum!"

Damien's rant ended quickly, and only then did he realize what he'd done. He began sweating profusely as he watched Lynn Carter's frosty expression.

But unexpectedly, she broke into a slight smile. "Right, we're all just one of many here. There is no significance in anything we do regardless of how great it is. I apologize for my rudeness, Professor."

"Hm?"

Damien numbly accepted Lynn's handshake, not knowing what to do next. This wasn't the reaction he expected from her.

The Evotech employees he'd met so far were prideful. Even when they attempted to hide it, it was far too easy to feel their ingrained pride as employees of Evotech, of the company that ruled the world.

Yet, Damien didn't see any of that in Lynn. If anything, her spirit seemed deflated and unwilling.

A wild thought appeared in Damien's mind when he saw her current appearance. Although it was their first meeting, he had a sudden good feeling.

'This woman...would it be possible to convince her to rebel?'

Chapter 523 Garden [1]

Life became especially bland for two months.

After Damien's first encounter with Lynn Carter, their relationship didn't improve at all. Instead, they remained fire and ice. No matter how much Damien tried to melt the ice cube, it wouldn't budge.

Due to this, any cooperation the pair could've done was taken off the table. Damien's job was demoted to assistant, at least between the two of them.

And frankly, Damien had no problem with this arrangement. Eve provided him information, but didn't help him comprehend that information. Even though he could talk for ages, he couldn't actually provide insights or aid in a field he had no experience in.

But if there was someone giving him detailed instructions about everything, he'd have no problem at all. The assistant role was perfect for the current Damien.

A byproduct of constantly working together was constantly being together. During this time, Damien was able to get a basic grasp of Lynn Carter's character.

Lynn Carter wasn't cold nor was she warm. In terms of personality, there wasn't much special about her. At least on the surface, she came off as an average researcher with an above-average brain.

But Damien could see something hidden beneath that. Occasionally, she would make remarks that didn't fit her usual personality at all. And without fail, these remarks were said when complaining about Evotech.

Despite her casual exterior, Damien's perception wasn't so weak. He understood the fox that hid within her body.

In fact, converting her didn't seem to be necessary. It was more apt to say Damien needed to form a connection and cooperate with her.

As for the pair's research, it was related to the Outer Wilds. Specifically, they were researching ways for humans to explore the desolate wasteland without being corroded by the ambient mana and air.

Once again, Damien found a project that was pivotal in the survival of mankind. Yet, it was being done by a company that destroys planets at their whims. This kind of parallel made Damien feel uncomfortable.

When faced with the world, he never had to consider right or wrong. Firstly, he was a firm believer in the "strength is king" dynamic. And secondly, he had complete belief in his own moral code.

But in the same vein, he wasn't ever put in a situation that was truly grey. In the eyes of this world's denizens, perhaps he'd be a villain. Yet, in the eyes of the rest of humanity, he'd be a hero.

Damien found himself hesitating. He found himself constantly asking himself a question he'd already answered in the past.



'What kind of person do I want to be?'

The meaning of this question changed in wartime. Ever since Damien left the Primordial Undying Realm, the war had been the main priority in Damien's mind.

Ever since he viewed Alaric's memories and witnessed the brutality of war firsthand, he'd never been able to rid himself of that sight.

Millions, billions, an uncountable number of existences died like nothing. While Damien's morality didn't sway at these deaths, something else inside him did.

It was this so-called concept of "humanity."

As he reintegrated with society, Damien returned to being a "human." However, his moral code was created in the time when he was trapped in the dungeon, the time when he was a "beast."

Although his views changed over time, the core of his belief had never been tampered with. Everything else was simply built upon it.

If there was one thing he knew, it was that he didn't want to be a hero.

Heroes were pathetic. They were people whose spirit was built on the will of others. This kind of person was fated to carry an immense and fragile burden. If they made one misstep, the entire public would turn against them, and their spirit would directly collapse.

A true hero wasn't a hero at all. True heroes were the ones Damien saw on the battlefield during the 10 years he spent there.

The old dwarf, Indomitable. It wasn't his given name, but the nickname he was given within the alliance. Although it was domineering, he didn't fail to live up to it in the slightest.

Old Man Indomitable was already tens of thousands of years old by then. His craft had been honed to the utmost, and he had reached the Demigod realm through forging alone.

And the weapons he made for the soldiers, those weapons that would never fail them even in the direst of situations, they saved innumerable lives. Old Man Indomitable was a true hero, but his name was never passed down to the following generations, his legacy going uninherited and unknown.

There were countless others like him that Alaric met on the battlefield.

Swift Flower, a woman who burned her own soul to save her comrades from the pursuit of a Demigod, Atlas, a Giant who used physical strength alone to hold a world together and prevent its collapse, staying stationary in this position for hundreds of years before reinforcements arrived...and even Alaric himself.

These people were unsung heroes. If it wasn't for their contribution, the final result of the ancient war wouldn't have been nearly as optimistic as it was.

But in the end, they all died.

Damien didn't know how many sacrificed themselves or how many died with the passage of time, but it was true that at least Alaric died after giving everything he had for what he believed in.

Could Damien do that?

If he thought about it rationally, the answer was no. When his strength grew enough, he could expand the Sanctuary so much that he could fit any and everyone into it. Perhaps, he could even send entire worlds to merge with it.

Although that strength sounded far away, Damien knew that it wasn't. He knew how massive the difference between 3rd and 4th class was.

And if Damien was ever in a situation where everything he cared about was safely tucked away in the Sanctuary, he would no longer have any reason to fight.

This was the reality of his situation.

However, no matter how unrighteous Damien's mind was, his heart always adored heroes.

What young boy wouldn't? Especially to someone like Damien who submerged himself in fantasy before his life changed, being the hero who saved everyone and took the spotlight was incredibly appealing. It was the kind of domineering appearance he'd always wanted.

But Damien already grew out of those childish fantasies. The only thing left was a subconscious knot that he only realized when the issue presented itself.

Damien smiled wryly. In the end, he couldn't decide at all what kind of person he'd be. Nevertheless, he was always a simple person.

In a situation where he couldn't predict or plan for the future, the only thing left to do was act however he felt was right in the moment.

Quietly, Damien stood up. It didn't feel like anything changed about him, but at the same time, he didn't feel the same as before.

His thoughts had been insignificant, it was simply a random tangent he suddenly had. Yet, the effect this tangent had wasn't simple.

His mind felt calmer.

The threat of the war, the threat of dying so meaninglessly after expending so much effort, it terrified him. It was impossible for someone like him who hadn't experienced anything to easily accept such wide-scale death and destruction.

But he was slowly accommodating it. He was attempting to grow into the clothes that were forced onto him. This way, perhaps he'd at least be somewhat prepared for what was to come.

And it seemed...he'd made a small bit of progress in the growth spurt he desperately hoped for.

Chapter 524 Garden [2]

Damien walked through the white hallways of Evotech. He decided to walk home today instead of using the teleportation devices.

After all, something fun was going to happen.

The last 2 months weren't spent idly. Long Chen slowly healed back to peak condition using both the boost of Damien's [Heal] trait and a healing serum that General Strohman injected into his body. After that, he slowly acclimated to military life and began rapidly rising in position.

Long Chen's sword talent was simply marvelous. Even when he entered a state of forgetfulness and began training from the beginning, his progress was rapid, using 2 months to reach a level many soldiers only dreamed of.

With how the two of them were slowly gaining trust and reputation, Damien understood that it wouldn't take long for them to be introduced to Evotech's reality.

As for Aishia, he didn't quite know what she was doing. That woman always acted perfectly in her role, so it would be assumed that she always stayed home, but Damien wasn't sure about that.

Something about Aishia was off, and that was the main reason why he didn't include her into many of his plans.

And the biggest variable in his plan was also the most unexpected one. The little girl masquerading as his daughter, Reva.

Truthfully, she didn't do anything suspicious. But Damien's instinct was raging. It wasn't just a gut feeling, it was the same strange intuition that led him to find Zara and warned him before his fall.

This intuition was ringing alarm bells constantly. As long as Reva was around, Damien's senses would subconsciously go on high alert.

This little girl was too strange. The look in her eyes was dull and clear as if there wasn't a single thing that escaped her breadth. However, as long as she wasn't doing anything, Damien couldn't do anything either.

Reva never talked to him in the first place. The only time she would act somewhat close to familial was when there were gazes on them.

Regardless, none of that mattered at the moment. Damien was simply thinking idly as he waited for the event to start.

His steps led him to a clear bridge roughly 15 feet off the ground. This was one of the connection points between different buildings in the complex.

As he walked through it, he hummed lightly. Life had been good recently. Although he was tortured, he was compensated with an amazing promotion and pay raise. Even his wife was given a better position.

How could he not be happy? The past 2 months were like proof that all the effort he put into his research was worth something. Even if that Lynn Carter didn't acknowledge him, Evotech Headquarters had!

As he reached the middle point of the bridge, four shadows appeared around him, concealed in the darkness of night.

Their gazes switched between each other as they held a silent conversation. But, considering their current target, there was no need for excessive planning.

"White Shadow, there is no need for us to think so far. Even if Evotech knows our movements, they won't care for a small researcher like him. Even if he has a little regeneration talent, that only makes him slightly more important."

The voice that sent the mental transmission was young, roughly 13-14 years old. However, this person was currently partaking in such a dangerous mission without any qualms.

The one called White Shadow was their leader. Her reputation was spread far and wide, known even to those outside of their organization. She was one of the highest-level members, which was especially surprising since the current mission was so simple.

White Shadow shook her head. "Fine. I also agree with you, but I have to approach the situation as a leader. I cannot recklessly act and endanger the lives of my subordinates."

Her thoughts were true to her words. She didn't understand why she was sent on this mission, but since the executives believed it was worthy of her attention, she'd approach it with caution.

The four shadows had already followed her cautious approach for many weeks. They'd been quietly observing their target and understanding his routines.

And they found that every week on the sixth day, the researcher would take a specific path to the cafeteria. While this path was the most scenic route, it was also the most flawed. In particular, there was a newly constructed bridge that didn't have working surveillance yet.

They surrounded their target the instant he stepped onto this bridge. After White Shadow gave a few more reminders to prioritize safety, they moved.

One went for the head, covering Damien's mouth with a dark substance and silencing him. The little girl approached from the back, wrapping her arms around Damien's and tightly constraining them.

Four people were too many for such a simple task. While the three under her worked, White Shadow stood back and watched for any unforeseen changes.



As her eyes panned the area, they suddenly landed on the man who was being restrained. His expression looked a bit...off?

White Shadow's eyes narrowed. Was this man actually...smiling?

She concentrated her awareness and pierced the material covering his face. When she saw his entire visage, she realized that he had an amused smile on his face as he watched the three around him.

His eyes moved. They locked directly with hers. He smiled brightly at her, his eyes turning into crescents. White Shadow felt her heart skip a beat.

He knew. From the moment they arrived, he knew. The reason he walked this route was so that they could easily capture him.

But why?

Did he understand the situation? But that was impossible! There wasn't a single person on the inside who'd leak their information. They'd made especially sure of this.

But if he didn't know, why was he confident? Was it simple confidence in his strength?

As White Shadow pondered, she noticed the man's lips began moving. As she carefully traced his words...

'Don't mind me and just keep doing what you're doing.'

His voice arrived in her ear casually. She couldn't even sense his mana approaching, clearly delineating their difference.

White Shadow shook her head furiously. She was an early 4th class existence. Even within this rank, she was one of the strongest. Yet, she was being threatened by a mere 3rd class researcher?

While her pride hurt, she knew her senses didn't deceive her. She'd been through too many life-or-death situations to console herself with nonsense.

Instead, she stopped worrying about things that were above her caliber.

'Even if he can defeat us, that's only because we're in the younger generation. When he meets Master and the other elders, he won't be able to make a single move out of line. I'll just let Master handle this.'

The squad that had been sent this time was still in training. Even White Shadow, who had peerless strength and talent, was only 20. She hadn't graduated to becoming a true member of their organization yet.

Regardless, the fact that their mission was completed successfully was true. The only order White Shadow received was to bring him back to their headquarters:

The three juniors under her command wrapped up their work soon enough since Damien didn't try to resist at all.

With him bound, the four melded into the shadows around them, disappearing from reality as they silently moved back to their rendezvous point.

Chapter 525 Garden [3]

To Damien, getting kidnapped was a really novel experience. After all, kidnapping a spatial expert was a joke. To even consider doing so, an insane amount of planning was needed. The timing, precision, and even equipment needed to restrict a spatial expert to were exorbitant.

That was why Damien spent an entire 2 months letting them observe him. If they wanted to grab him properly, they should've at least set up a spatial lock.

But he realized that the ones kidnapping him didn't know his identity at all. From the information they were given, he was just a normal researcher.

'Haa, you play too many games.' He sighed to himself. Still, he was enjoying the chauffeur service these shadows turned into.

White Shadow in particular was annoyed with his behavior, being the only one who noticed it. Nevertheless, she ignored him and simply did the mission she was assigned.

It didn't take long for the group to reach a secluded area within Evotech Headquarters. After doing so, each of the shadows pulled out a necklace with a small blue pendant, injecting mana into it.

Voom!

Four miniature spatial arrays formed under their feet. The one under White Shadow encompassed Damien as well. And then, the group disappeared.

Evotech's alarm system finally went off. With this, another researcher had been kidnapped. And once again, the only trace left was that of spatial mana.

Looking at it this way, these assassins were quite smart. Using the same methods would hint at the same culprit, but this culprit was still unknown.

It had to be said, during the two months that passed, Evotech didn't release their high-security state. Even if their technique in kidnapping him was shoddy, Damien knew these shadows were extremely skilled to be able to walk freely in Evotech without fear.

Regardless, Damien was no longer at Evotech. When the spatial fluctuations around him cleared up, he found himself in a large open space surrounded by flora and fauna.

When compared to the Hub Cities and Outer Wilds of the unnamed world, the current location was like a completely different realm.

There were lush green grasses lining the entire ground, foliage and beasts all over, and clear natural springs and rivers as well.

"Hmm..." Damien hummed as he looked around. It was an impressive sight in comparison, but in reality, it was quite modest and homey.

"Even after sensing our presences, you still don't greet us? You are quite the daring boy." An elderly voice came from behind him.

Damien shrugged noncommittally. "You brought me to such a fun place, you should at least let me enjoy it a bit first, no?"

"Hahahaha! It's really as she said! This boy is cheeky enough to make your nerves itch. But does he have the strength to back up his attitude?"

"Shut up, Albeus. We don't have time to play your games."

"Boy, turn around and face us. We have called you here for a reason."

The three voices who spoke were different from the first. It wasn't surprising, though, as Damien already sensed the six elders behind his back.

They were sitting on such gaudy thrones that he almost didn't want to turn around and look at them with his eyes, but he didn't really have a choice.

As he turned around, the aura of Divinity clashed against his body in waves. Not just one or two, but three of these elders were Demigods.

As for the other three, they were essentially Quasi-Demigods, beings at the extreme peak of 4th class.

"Ah, yes. It is my honor to meet your exalted selves. This humble one is Damien Void, and here is some unnecessary sophistry to wet your egos before we talk. Merry Christmas."

"Boy, you...!" The first voice fumed. He was a small old man seemingly of an imp or goblin-like race. His nose was crooked and he had a large pair of glasses on his eyes that enlarged them by many times.

As for the other six, they were two more men and three women, causing an even split. The Albeus who spoke earlier was a large middle-aged man with an unholy amount of muscles. As for the two that rebuked him, they were a pair of twins on the female side.

In reality, Albeus was one of the three Demigods among them, with the other two being the remaining man and woman who hadn't spoken yet. However, his personality was the simplest.

The two twins were kids he viewed as nieces or daughters, and with them similarly seeing them as their uncle, they had no fear of rebuking him like a normal old man.

As Damien appraised the dynamic between these six, the feeling he got was far more...real when compared to the atmospheres he felt from both Niflheim and Asgard.

It was something akin to their "flow," but Damien didn't understand it well enough to accurately describe it yet.

Whatever the case may be, he felt more comfortable around these six than he did with others. This was a natural feeling, and also the reason why he greeted them so rudely.

Because he decided to be reckless.

He used his own body in a gamble to test the waters. If he lost, he'd get punished by a Demigod, but if he won, he'd be able to pause the character he'd been playing recently.

Damien was tired of Damien Grey. That guy was too much of a coward, too indecisive when it wasn't related to research.

And he was too much of a slave to his research. Even if he was demoted to being a true slave, he wouldn't care as long as his hands were able to remain on a project.

This kind of character went against Damien's character completely. Now that he was in a position where he could drop it, he'd gladly do so.

"How long did you know?" A voice separate from the six spoke up. Walking out from a nearby section of foliage was the very woman who arranged his kidnapping.

"Wasn't it obvious from the beginning? Though, it took you around a week, and that was with all my constant prodding. I didn't imagine a researcher could be so dense."

"Did you forget that you're disguised right now? Even if you look similar, there's some strange magic that messes with my perception."

"Is that your way of telling me you're blind?"

"Shut up."

Right, the woman in front of Damien was none other than Lynn Carter herself. She was the main reason why this organization set its sights on him.

Not on Damien Grey, but Damien Void.

As for the secondary reason...that was something that came later.

For now, Damien turned his attention to Lynn and the six experts.



"I'm sure you've already been introduced to me by her, but my name is Damien Void. At the moment, my goal is the destruction of the two societies that are ruling this world. And you?"

Albeus smiled. "Perfect! I love straightforward people the most. My name is Albeus, this kooky old man is Reynold, these twins are Alex and Alice, and the stuck-up pair over there is Oberon and Crystal. Our long-standing goal is the exact same one you've just mentioned. The destruction of Niflheim and Asgard."

Chapter 526 Garden [4]

Damien nodded. This wasn't anything out of his expectation. After all, was there any other reason for a third group to exist if not to oppose the other two?

After Damien's suspicion of Asgard started growing, he also started to assume about the existence of this group. However, he didn't have any methods to confirm his thoughts.

When he met Lynn, he came to realize that she wasn't some normal researcher. She was clearly someone who was involved in the rapidly changing undercurrents of this world. But this wasn't enough for Damien to suspect her.

That only happened when he first sensed the group of shadows that came after him.

Lynn was his only new interaction, and although his status was precarious enough for those shadows to be sent for anyone, reality was different.

Asgard still had confidence in Eve, the AI implanted in his head. Meanwhile, Niflheim had confidence in themselves. As he was a researcher at Evotech, he was already in their grasp.

The only one who didn't have a connection point to contact him through was this organization.

As for why they contacted him? In reality, his face hadn't been changed too much from his original appearance. Besides his hair and eyes turning back to their original color, his facial structure was only somewhat played with.

It was enough to fool anyone who'd never interacted with Damien before. It was also enough to fool those who'd only seen him once or twice.

However, it didn't fool Lynn Carter. Damien realized this not long after he understood Lynn's position.

If his memory wasn't wrong, he'd remained concealed the entire time he first saw Lynn. But during the confusion of that time, she must've seen him at least once.

Though, it was still strange for her to remember his face or even consider his use. If she saw him randomly, she wouldn't put any value in him.

"The moment I first saw you was when you were interacting with the World Core."

The first sentence out of her mouth cleared all of Damien's suspicions. If it was that moment, then of course the image would be too startling for anyone to forget.

A human actually interacting with a World Core. This was the kind of thing Niflheim dreamed of accomplishing, yet some unknown brat had beaten them to it.

"I want you to join me in the Core Extraction project, and Niflheim has agreed after seeing your dedication these past few months. But before I take you there, I have to first understand your position."

'Are you siding with us, or are you siding with them?'

This was the question Lynn asked Damien. He had to pick a side.

Niflheim didn't need to be mentioned. As for Asgard, its corruption originated from Niflheim as well.

"...but our Shadow Garden is different. We were born from those on both sides, created from those who betrayed their original affiliations in the name of justice."

Damien looked around. Currently, only the six experts and Lynn were present. Even White Shadow and her team had disappeared at some point.

But from these seven people alone, Damien could see the truth in Lynn's words.

Lynn was originally a normal citizen in Niflheim territory. If what Damien remembered wasn't wrong, then she had family being kept captive by Niflheim.

As for the short old man, he was also a member of Niflheim. Many of his body parts weren't human but from beasts. He was evidently someone who suffered from Chimera experimentation.

As for the rest...

The twin women Alex and Alice were actually members of the Giant race. Although their forms were human-sized, not being taller than 5 feet 8 inches, this wasn't strange for Giants.

The Giant Race's name might've made it seem as if their entire race was filled with massive people, but that wasn't true. In reality, the smaller a giant was, the stronger they were.

Giants were a race who were widely known for their physical strength. Even a 3rd class giant could crush mountains with a single punch.

And because of how massive their physical strength was, they tended to have massive bodies.

For a giant to have a smaller body meant they were adept enough at controlling and compressing their strength to lower their size. This wasn't a matter of shame, but one of pride.

Naturally, not all giants sought to grow smaller. There were some who drew pride from their original size. These two factions of giants were both prevalent, but they didn't fight amongst themselves.

Giants were, in Damien's opinion, the best race in existence.

They were extremely strong and domineering, but they were simple as well. Giants didn't fight other giants. Infighting was something they despised from their cores.

Not only that, but in general, giants were the most benevolent race. To those who treat them right and those who act righteously, they were the most trustworthy comrades. Against scum and villains, they were devils from the deepest depths of hell.

One only needed to look at the giant named Atlas for proof of this fact. In the ancient war, he spent tens or even hundreds of years holding a world together without moving even a single inch.

This world was just some random world that got caught as collateral damage. Even though it didn't have any personal value for Atlas, he still sacrificed himself to save it.

Truthfully, the second he checked their status and realized that these two twins were Giants, he trusted Shadow Garden.

If it was before, he'd have to walk on eggshells with them until he came to know their true goals.

But the instinct of a Giant couldn't be fooled by even a Demigod. It was as if the universe loved them too much to let them suffer.

Giants were the greatest assurance of the character of those around them.

Regardless, after Damien learned of these six people's identities, he also learned much about the organization named Shadow Garden.

Except for him, all of its members were traitors from either Asgard or Niflheim. Not only that, but they were also all people who bound themselves to the organization through Mana Oaths.

By the time their conversation ended, Damien had a solid grasp on the type of organization this was.

It had all the motivation to achieve its goal, but it didn't have the means. It didn't have a pillar that could lead it forward.

The six experts of Shadow Garden couldn't move unless they wanted to provoke the peak experts of the other two organizations. The three acted and kept each other in check through this kind of checks and balances system.

And what Shadow Garden needed right now was someone who looked weak but was actually strong, someone who could act freely and empower their troops, granting both hope and opportunity to the organization.

And they wanted Damien to be this figurehead.

Damien smiled wryly when he realized this. What they were telling him to do was act as usual, but with an entire organization backing him.

But if he needed to think about the interests of an organization as he moved, could it truly be considered "as usual?"

Damien sighed. For now, he didn't accept or reject their proposal. Instead, he put it to the side.

Before he decided anything so important, first he'd experience Shadow Garden for himself.

Chapter 527 Garden [5]

If Damien had to use one word to describe Shadow Garden, he'd most likely call it contradictory.

Because despite its ominous name, the atmosphere within was quite warm.

It had to be remembered, Shadow Garden was essentially a safe space created for refugees. Only the experts among them knew of their rebellious thoughts. The others were simply happy to have escaped their previous hells.

And there were plenty of others.

As Damien enjoyed the scenic view of the lush island he seemed to be on, these non-combatants were the first people his eyes landed on.

He ended up conversing with a few of them out of curiosity.

Why they joined Shadow Garden, how life had been for them, the conversation wasn't intimidating, it just seemed like a local teaching a foreigner about their customs.

And that was truly all it was. Perhaps the reason Damien was treated so well by the refugees might've been because his attitude was pure curiosity with no hidden intentions.

Through these conversations, Damien learned that the refugees present were not only from Asgard and Niflheim, but also stragglers who were forced to survive in the Outer Wilds and those who escaped the chaotic environment of the Hub Cities.

More than anything else, Shadow Garden was a place to foster these people. Damien understood this truth.

'It's strange.' He thought to himself. 'If I continue to desperately look for a reason why these people shouldn't be trusted, I'll be the one marked crazy.'



There was no longer any reason for him to suspect Shadow Garden to be like the other two forces. They were extremely open with him, allowing him to move freely as if he was already a member of their organization.

Damien didn't understand how they could trust him so much within their territory, but he realized they might simply be assured of their own strength.

As day and night interchanged, Damien spent more than just a few days in this vacation-like routine. He talked to the locals, explored the small island, and experienced the culture.

He was also made aware that this patch of greenery was truly an island. Or rather, it was better to be called an Oasis. This patch of land was a separate space located in the Outer Wilds. If one didn't have the strength to brave the dangers to arrive here, they'd never know it existed.

Even from outside perception, it was invisible. For the location of a refugee camp, it was hidden enough.

Damien's steps took him around. It was his fourth day in Shadow Garden, and today, he found himself somewhere closer to the central area.

This place was usually blocked off from the public, it was where the experts of the organization took residence. But even then, Damien was allowed to peruse it.

The guards at the entrance to this section of the island only told him that he was restricted from entering anyone's property without permission, but this was simply basic human decency. He had no plans to intrude on anyone.

As he walked through this area, he admired the way the foliage and landscape had been altered to fit all the residences and facilities. At the same time, the arrangement of the buildings mirrored the records of a few ancient arrays Damien had seen in the past.

Ting~!

His admiration of the landscape was cut short by a crisp sound. It was a clear melodic note that seemed to descend from the heavens, painting the core residences with splendor.

Ting~! Ting~! Ting~!

Damien's steps halted. He began walking in the direction of the music notes as if he was entranced. In this zombie-like state, his mind entered his spiritual world and could only watch his body move.

But there was a strange profundity to this detachment. Damien felt like if he truly wanted to, he could sluggishly control his body, though his movements wouldn't be altered from their current path.

He soon reached a covert hut that stood atop an overarching hill. Compared to the other residences, it was incredibly shabby, but the homey feel coming from it was far more welcoming.

Ting~! Ting~!

Ting~!

The sound of music filled the air, causing the surrounding elements to dance in joy. Damien's body stood among these dancing elements, quietly appreciating the music.

Ting~!

Ting~! Ting~! Ting~!

It sounded like a string instrument that had far too many layers to be an ordinary string instrument. The sounds it produced had Asian influence, but Western patterns as well, making it hard to decipher its origins.

But naturally, this wasn't a piece of music that originated from Earth. Perhaps what compelled Damien to find its source was how strange and novel it was compared to the music he was used to.

With his body standing among the natural elements like so, Damien found himself regaining control. But he didn't move or walk away. Instead, he waved his hands in the air like a madman.

His bodily movements became more fluid, his feet taking tentative steps without any specific pattern. His arms cut through the air roughly at first, but their movements also became far more graceful.

Without realizing it, Damien began dancing across the flow of mana. His body followed the world's natural flow, the dancing elements in the atmosphere following his steps.

The scene became even more beautiful. The elements were dancing previously, this much was true, but they were doing so without direction. Now that they had such a skilled guide showing them the way, things were no longer so simple.

A vortex formed in front of the small hut. The sky above darkened, but this darkness wasn't ominous. Instead, it gave an inviting feel like what a mother's womb would feel like to a baby.

The lightning that crackled through these clouds didn't give off the frightening stench of death, but instead, the comfortable scent of life.

There was once a rumor that creation began with a lightning strike. Naturally, the laws surrounding the element weren't so simple and single-focused.

But this didn't matter. This wasn't lightning called by Damien, but lightning naturally formed as the elements excitedly danced through the air.

There were large flames streaking across the sky, waterfalls descending from the heavens, astral winds, and even rising earth monuments. Out of nowhere, this grand showing of natural elemental formation and destruction appeared for all to see, providing no small number of insights to the numerous experts in the surroundings.

As for the causes of this phenomenon?

Damien continued to mindlessly follow the world's flow. The elements followed him without missing a single step. And from the small hut, the strange music continued to play, exciting the world into action.

Damien didn't know how he felt right now. He followed his instinct and the path it showed him, and somehow, he felt like he touched upon World Force without needing to use his Celestial status as a crutch.

But that was all for another time.

The music slowly faded away with time. It had already been playing for many hours already. Along with the music, Damien's actions in the field also halted, bringing the elements down from their high and allowing them to settle into the atmosphere once more.

As the scene calmed, the door to the small hut opened, giving way to the jade-like figure of a certain girl...

Chapter 528 Garden [6]

Damien stared at this girl blankly, but before he was even able to get a proper impression of her, multiple auras converged on their location.

"Clarice!"

"Little Risa!"

"What happened here?! Who is the rat intruding upon our sanctuary?!"

A slew of exclamations followed those auras, loud voices filled with mana attempting to break Damien's will before the bodies of these experts could arrive.

But Damien simply stood and waited for them. These mere threats wouldn't make him budge at all. The mana contained in those voices brushes over him like a warm spring breeze.

Whoosh!

Over the figures arrived within seconds, the group being a random collection of men and women. But without even acknowledging Damien's existence, this group rushed over to the girl's side and began hounding her.

"Clarice, are you okay?"

"Lady Clarice, please tell us if you encounter any problems."

"Risa, what was all that energy? Don't tell me you went berserk again?!"

The voices of concern were a mixture of those speaking for benefit and those speaking from the heart, but regardless of their reasoning, it was clear how much these experts valued the girl named Clarice.

And as soon as they judged that she was fine, their attention turned on him.

"Boy, you actually dare to peep on our Risa? Do you have a death wish?!"

A woman in front of the rest spoke menacingly. The aura of an early 4th class existence weighed on Damien's shoulders, attempting to force him to kneel.

Void Essence circulated through his body and removed the invading aura. At the same time, Damien's bending back returned to its upright position, his eyes staring straight into the woman's eyes without fear.

This showing naturally filled the woman with rage. With her status and strength, there wasn't a single person who dared to disrespect her. And now this brat was easily resisting her coercion? This was an immense slap to the face!

She was initially going easy on him, but she no longer had the desire to do so. The strength of the aura weighing on Damien's body increased exponentially.

Although this showing irked Damien, he didn't say anything or show anger. This woman's strength was already a step below him. Why should he needlessly fight with her?

It was at this time that the girl named Clarice finally spoke up. "Big sister, he didn't interrupt me at all. Why are you trying to hurt him?"

Her voice was clear and soft like the sound jingling of morning bells transmitted through dew drops. It had a soothing effect that would calm one's soul without one even realizing it.

Naturally, the woman was affected by this strange power. Her spirit was soothed and her aura melted away, freeing Damien from his not-so-confining confinement.

After doing so, Clarice ignored her "big sister" and turned her eyes to Damien. Her eyes were large like an anime character, her pupils a tranquil black color that seemed capable of sucking one's soul.

"May I be so rude as to ask this sir's name? As sir is aware, this lowly one is named Clarice." Her tone was extremely humble, like a mortal talking to a supreme master.

Damien felt strange hearing this kind of tone directed at him, but he responded naturally, giving her his name.

"Damien Void."

"Damien...what an interesting name."



Damien cringed. If not anything else, the fact that she didn't repeat his last name embarrassed him. He didn't know whether or not it was on purpose, but it was a low blow nonetheless.

"Sir Damien, would you perhaps be interested in having a chat with me over some tea?" Clarice asked suddenly, much to the chagrin of the surrounding experts.

But Damien was too quick in agreeing. Before these experts could even comprehend the situation, the two young ones had already entered the hut together, closing the door.

The group had a mixture of expressions on their faces, but they were mostly wry smiles. As always, their Risa did whatever she wanted.

'Let it be. Even I'm curious to see what becomes of this combination.'

It was only after this sound transmission arrived that the experts finally calmed down. Looking at the hut one last time, they retreated back to their own residences. As for the sound transmission they received, even Damien didn't notice its mana fluctuations.

Currently, he was seated on the floor in front of a small table, Clarice sitting opposite from him.

"Why did you call me here?" Damien asked curiously.

His semi-conscious movements earlier were extremely beneficial to his comprehension of World Force, and since this little girl was the one who allowed such a thing to happen, Damien naturally had a positive opinion of her.

"Mm, I was simply curious?" Clarice responded, tilting her head. It seemed like even she didn't know why she invited him.

But Damien didn't think so. Even if her aura was innocent and pure, Damien refused to believe anyone in this universe could maintain such purity as they grew.

Even the most innocent person would have to walk a bloody path for strength. This was the singular law that governed the universe.

People who radiated such innocent auras usually fell into two categories.

There were the snakes who used their aura and atmosphere to lure in prey, and there were saints who had benevolent hearts and only killed in the name of justice.

Regardless of the reasoning, it was true that a pure aura almost never truly meant "purity."

But there was an outlier...

Damien shook off the thought. Even if what he assumed was the truth, it didn't have anything to do with him.

"Sir Damien, if it isn't too presumptuous to ask...how did you do that?"

Clarice got to the main point relatively fast. She didn't spend too much time trying to lead Damien around.

And when Damien heard her question, he realized it. Right, this girl had been trying to use her music to move the elements into action before he even arrived.

At that point, the only thing she could do was cause them to materialize and dance through the skies like an Aurora Borealis. But Damien was different.

The instant Damien began his strange movements, the elements followed him and multiplied as if he was showing them their natural path.

This wasn't something a human should've been able to do. As a matter of fact, even Elves and Spirits who were loved by nature might not be able to pull off what Damien did.

But the problem was...

'How am I supposed to answer a question even I don't know the answer to?' Damien smiled wryly as he thought.

His movements were entirely instinctual. While he realized that he was following the "flow" of the world, he also had no idea what this meant. It was terminology that appeared in his head as if he'd always known it.

This phenomenon was quite normal for people who experienced natural enlightenment. The will of the universe itself would bestow names and terminology that could be used, ingraining them in practitioners' minds before they exited their ethereal state.

Nevertheless, Damien had no way of answering Clarice's question. First, he needed to find that answer for himself.

But before their conversation could continue...

BOOOOOOM!

A massive explosion rocked the Shadow Garden's very foundation.

Chapter 529 Egg [1]

BOOOOOOM!

It didn't end with a single explosion. Multiple massive blasts rang out from all sides. When the largest explosion rang out from above, cracks appeared in the sky.

Like a virtual game glitching out, the sky jittered and bugged. Slowly but surely, the sky itself shattered into pieces and disappeared. The image of peace and tranquility that the Shadow Garden held disappeared completely.

When the sky finally stopped functioning, what was revealed to everyone's eyes was the desolate atmosphere of the Outer Wilds. With the artificial sky gone, the Shadow Garden really did look like an oasis in hell.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The explosions didn't stop after the sky caved. Large blasts rang out across the surface of the spatial walls isolating Shadow Garden from the Outer Wilds. But just looking at these blasts wasn't enough for Damien to determine how they were created.

"The Vicious Beasts are back at it again. Sir Damien, please rest here. We can continue our conversation at a later time." Clarice stood up gracefully and did something similar to a curtsy. Afterwards, she directly left the cabin, taking her instrument and flying into the air.

Damien watched her go in silence. His attention was currently elsewhere. Turning his attention to the spatial walls, his figure flashed away, appearing on their periphery.

'This is...' His thoughts moved slowly. Before, when he was touring the organization, he didn't see any signs of these spatial walls, nor did he perceive them. It was only due to the strange quality of the surrounding space that he could determine it was isolated.

But now, these spatial walls were brought into reality by the explosions going on. How could Damien not be attracted to it?

After training in the chaotic space on the journey to Niflheim, Damien slowly began to understand what "Dimensional Magic" actually meant. His uses of it until this point had been far too superficial.

But at the same time, he was missing a single thing that would allow him to bring out the full potential of his comprehension ability.

The power of Laws.

When one entered 4th class, the most qualitative change one would undergo was in their mana. With the universe acknowledging one's qualifications and allowing one to manipulate its foundational elements, it wasn't something as simple as a mere power or purity boost.

The mana in one's body would become an existence of a higher level. With this kind of mana along with the ability to deal with space on a much deeper level, Damien might finally be able to use Dimensional Magic as true Dimensional Magic.

His thoughts followed this path as he gazed at the spatial wall. An application like it was something even he could do, and it could only be considered a basic prerequisite to using Dimensional Magic.

"Superimposing." This was the concept he focused on.

Damien flashed outside the boundaries of the Shadow Garden, appearing in the midst of the chaotic Outer Wilds. Just a few kilometers away, he could see massive beasts lining the horizon.

BOOOOM!

A beast opened its mouth and shot a large ball of black fire into the spatial wall above Damien's head. The fire spread rapidly, swallowing Damien's figure whole.

'Hm? This fire can corrode mana. Is this the product of these beasts evolving in the Outer Wilds?'

Damien revolved his Void Essence and purged the corroding flames in his body. As he thought about it more, this was a natural effect.

His body turned into a blur and appeared among the crowd of beasts. An invisible ripple spread in all directions, causing space to shatter into countless pieces.

The Mirror Domain had been activated. With the limited intelligence of these beasts, the disorienting effect of the domain alone was enough to drive them mad. Once they began to stampede and ran into the numerous spatial tears littering the air, they would simply kill themselves.

Damien watched this happen passively. Although these beasts gained a corrosion attribute, their minds weren't able to survive their evolution. After all, they evolved in an environment destroyed by Nox mana.

They did their best to adapt, but adaptation was never an option. Nox mana in particular was a breed of mana created so that no life could survive its advent.

In essence, these beasts were like puppets. Their strength was superficial, their minds were hardly there, and they spent their lives wandering and randomly attacking anything they saw.

Damien clicked his tongue. Feeling the experience from all the beasts he killed rushing into his body, he suddenly had an idea.

'Ah!'

Void Essence revolved rapidly, capturing the formless and traceless essence known as experience without letting it merge into his body. While he did so, he sent a part of his consciousness into the Sanctuary and pulled out a few people.

Little Xue'er, Elitra, Feng Qing'er, and Lunaria Snow. The people in the Sanctuary that he had true relationships with.

Although he also thought to call a few other people, he realized that what he was currently doing wouldn't benefit them, so he left them alone.



Instead, he focused on the four girls in front of him. "Alright! You're going to feel something entering your bodies, but don't resist!"

Damien cringed at his own words. Considering Feng Qing'er's usual behavior, she would've teased him for it, but she didn't say anything.

She was too shocked by the scene around her at the moment. Beasts lining the entire horizon, stampeding and killing each other within Damien's strange domain. It wasn't a scene one could simply adapt to.

But Damien didn't give them any time to adapt. They didn't need to, after all.

He gave them a few more warnings, making sure everyone was paying attention. Surprisingly, little Xue'er was the one who adapted the fastest.

Regardless, once they were all on the same page, Damien moved his Void Essence. The entrapped formless essence within was dispersed and evenly spread among the 4 girls. Once it entered their bodies, it merged into their very being, completely assimilating without any problems.

"Ah!"

Lunaria was the first to cry out. Feeling as if she grew stronger, she took an off-handed look at her own status, and when she did...

"I've already gained 3 levels?!"

Hearing her exclamation, Feng Qing'er and Elitra checked their statuses as well, seeing similar results. As for little Xue'er, she didn't care about any of that.

Her body turned into a miniature comet, rushing into Damien's embrace and wrapping around his torso like a koala.

Damien smiled wryly and patted her on the head. For the other three, he simply brought them to increase their strength so they could be of use in the future, but it was different for Xue'er.

Damien didn't think Xue'er would ever meet a day where she'd have to use her strength for something gruesome. He didn't want that day to come.

But if that day truly did come...he at least wanted her to be prepared to save herself.

Nevertheless, those present were ignorant to his thoughts. Seeing their excitement, Damien continued to direct his experience into their bodies to power-level them.

A wide grin spread on his lips. As expected, things went smoothly.

Chapter 530 Egg [2]

The methodology was simple, really.

There was one advantage Damien always had over his peers, his Void Physique. The only "skill" that formed from the Void Physique's abilities was Devour.

The Devour ability essentially took over the system's function. It converted the fallen enemy's corpse into experience and used that essence to modify Damien's body until it slowly became closer and closer to perfection.

From this, Damien was also able to understand what kind of concept experience was. But, that wasn't his main concern.

What he realized was that his Devour ability was able to directly motivate his growth because it took over the system's task.

Whenever the average person killed another, the experience from the corpse would be converted by the system and added to the experience bar. Damien could completely subvert this process.

It was why he didn't level up when he devoured. Only his stats would increase or sometimes he'd gain a trait.

And so, if he could control what happened to the experience after he captured it with Devour, couldn't he cheat the system and power level his friends and family?

It was only a thought until he put it into action. Seeing it work now made him smile wide.

But regardless, this kind of process wasn't entirely healthy. Being force-fed experience would never have the same effect as personally earning it.

Even if Damien raised troops this way, they'd be far worse than practitioners at the same level. They would barely be qualified as canon fodder.

But if it was just a few levels occasionally? Damien could naturally make that work.

After the power leveling session came to an end, Damien conversed a bit more with the three ladies and Xue'er before sending them back into the Sanctuary.

BOOOM!

The battle was still ongoing. On all sides of Damien where his Mirror Domain didn't cover, Shadow Garden's forces were fiercely battling against the beast horde. Considering how organized and calm they were, this wasn't their first time in a similar situation.

'Living in the Outer Wilds must be a struggle.' Damien thought to himself as he watched them.

The battle continued on for many minutes, and while Damien was watching it play out, he suddenly noticed something in the corner of his eye.

'Hm?'

His figure disappeared, reappearing at the far edges of the beast horde. By this point, he was more than just a few tens of kilometers away from the Shadow Garden.

'This beast horde is far larger than I expected. I don't think those Shadow Garden experts are prepared for a horde of this scale.'

With the way they were wantonly wasting mana on larger attacks as they fought, Damien knew they were just trying to get things done as fast as possible.

But the number of beasts he counted was at least a few hundred thousand. Even a 4th class expert would run out of mana trying to kill hundreds of thousands of 2nd classes.

But what caught Damien's attention wasn't the size of the horde. When a certain tentacled beast moved over a certain piece of land, its suction cups kicked up the dirt and exposed a shine unbecoming of the Outer Wilds' normal standards.

What Damien teleported over to see was the source of that shine.

His arms waved through the air, using spatial mana to cut through the ground. Slowly but surely, a glossy rainbow-colored rock around the size of a dinosaur egg appeared in his view.

'This...'

Damien didn't know what the device did, but it was exactly for situations like this that Eve existed. A string of information drifted into his head when he needed it.

'Let's see...Beast Incense Distribution Device?'

It was a bizarre name, but it was extremely direct. Damien didn't even need to glance at the rest of the information to know what it did.

The BIDD series of weapons were created for the military to use during beast tides and other similar events. Its function was to release a pheromone that'd attract beasts to its location. This way, the defending force could make a more concentrated assault and bring the beasts' attention where they wanted it.

In wartime, it wasn't used the same way. It was only natural for a device that attracted beasts to be used nefariously.

In this case, Damien was facing a BIDD-E, the E standing for egg in this case. There was also the BIDD-T tank, an airborne version, and many more other members of the BIDD series.

Seeing the list go on and on, Damien breathed a sigh of relief that he only had to deal with eggs. These were the simplest version and the easiest to destroy.

There weren't any trap functions to prevent its destruction.

Damien clutched his hand into a fist, distorting space and directly crushing the BIDD-E. His awareness spread and permeated the ground as he searched for more.

The beast incense eggs couldn't be used to affect larger areas. This was why other variants were created in the first place. If the people who incited this beast tide only had access to eggs, they'd surely use plenty of them to attract so many beasts.

And Damien was sure that the tide was unnatural.

After all, Shadow Garden was located in a pocket space.

With the way the spatial walls were clear as day while the beasts attacked, one would assume that they acted as a physical defense.

But that wasn't true.

If its existence was known, it existed. If it wasn't, it didn't. This was the most basic principle.

If there wasn't someone directing the beasts to attack specific locations along the spatial wall, even if the beasts walked through the space occupied by Shadow Garden, they wouldn't intermingle.

This was the kind of "superimposition" that Damien wanted to learn. This was the path he found into Dimensional Magic.

But everything was flawed. Now that the beasts were targeting the spatial walls perfectly, the superimposition effect lost all meaning.

Damien rapidly flashed through the battlefield every time he found the location of a new BIDD-E. By the time he was done, he'd already destroyed over twenty of them.

But at the same time, the beast tide that went on for hours on end also came to an end. Shadow Garden luckily had plenty of personnel, so when those original elders used up all their mana, they were able to switch out.

This carousel style allowed the elders to resist the beast tide until Damien finished up with the BIDD-Es and returned to help them.

Nevertheless, the small interlude presented by the beast tide slowly came to an end. Damien was left in the Outer Wilds with his awareness spread, searching for an indication about who was targeting Shadow Garden.



Even the fact that its existence was exposed was a danger. The fact that the force behind that knowledge was also unknown...

Damien's eyes turned a myriad of colors as the yin-yang symbols within them began to revolve. The world's mana became naked to his gaze.

'There it is.'

A trace of residual mana within the pit of the final BIDD-E he found. It wasn't a great deal of mana, nor was it enough to actually constitute a clue.

But to Damien, this was enough.

After all, the scent this mana gave off was incredibly familiar to him.